TO MY MOTHER

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Library of Congress Catalog Card No. 67-31101

Press of Schneidereith & Sons, Baltimore, Maryland

Printed in U. S. A.

Foreword

THIS NEW EDITION of Bach's so-called Three-part Inventions will be useful and, what is more important, pleasurable for students and especially for student-teachers. In the past fifty years, beginning with the activities of Wanda Landowska and Albert Schweitzer, the historic understanding of Bach's way of performing has made immense progress. This has been reflected in a scholarly way by numerous careful and accurate editions, including facsimile editions of the two principal manuscripts containing the Sinfonias. However, with a few notable exceptions such as Kirkpatrick's edition of the Goldberg Variations, the historical and philological knowledge gained has not been translated into artistic-educational terms. Obviously, the Two-part Inventions and Three-part Sinfonias here come to mind as one of the highest productions of Bach, the artist-educator, whose greatest works frequently arose from an educational impulse.

And so I was glad to learn that Diane Carliner—with enthusiasm and devotion, with courage and great care—selected these works to present them as works of art to music lovers old and young.

As she herself points out, she has tried to combine what is good in the traditional conception of Bach—and notably in the epoch-making Busoni edition—with the findings of today, including her own discoveries. Among these I was most of all impressed with her research into English music, for it had always seemed incomprehensible to me that Bach should have neglected English music when he paid so much attention to the music of every other nation then known. Here, I hope, future scholars will find a point of departure, as also in her incidental observation that it is futile to look for specific *affekts* in those Bach works not related to a text, regardless of the use of the same basic patterns Schweitzer pointed out for the cantatas and the organ preludes. Bach, the absolute musician, was as great as Bach, the composer of religious and other text-inspired music, just as Bach the teacher was omnipresent in his works for keyboard. But Bach the teacher was never tempted to become over-systematic, and he eschewed any kind of regularity, sometimes at the expense of the school rules guiding formal structure. The present edition is a welcome support for this important truth, and many other helpful bits of musical and pianistic information. I hope it will succeed.

KONRAD WOLFF

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Foreword

In *Bach Sinfonias: History and Performance* the author has undertaken, laudably and successfully, to clarify various problems of notation and analysis long associated with these works. At the same time the author endeavors to create interest in their study and appreciation of their content by both teacher and pupil. The Sinfonias have been overshadowed by other works of the great composer and as a result have been relatively neglected, and continue to be so neglected. Yet, as the author points out, they contain examples of all the many devices of polyphonic writing, are rich in contrast of mood and interesting from an interpretive standpoint. The source material is painstakingly and comprehensively documented and conclusions are carefully drawn to which the author has added individual approaches and personal comments. The use of a three-color scheme to delineate the three voices immediately presents a picture of the entire structure of each Invention and this enables the student to grasp the linear polyphony with much greater ease.

On the other hand, the author does not permit technical, formal or structural analysis to obscure the element upon which the value of these works rests, namely, their musical or emotional content. They are too often, as are also the Two-part Inventions, looked upon as good polyphonic studies (which, of course, they are), but it is the artistic manner in which Bach develops the technical resources that lends color and charm to the compositions. These remain, even if one does not subscribe to the effusive emotional meanings ascribed to them by Spitta in his monumental work on Bach. Properly presented to the student by a capable teacher, the Sinfonias can be made into interesting and attractive compositions—one of the aims which the author has in mind. Individually tinted phrases in the text and frequent effectively colored expressions indicate that, in spite of the laborious work entailed, the conception and execution of the book was a labor of love.

Otto R. Ortmann

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Preface

THIS BOOK is a venture into the exploration of excellent but insufficiently appreciated music. Although extensive research has gone into the formation of the book, the intent is not to extract the last particle of erudition from thousands of writings about J. S. Bach, nor to give the monolithic kind of study of Form and Analysis classes at conservatories and universities. It is, however, intended to serve as a guide to music of inestimable value; embracing all aspects of musical study, performance, theory, etc., and allowing for flexibility of interpretation on the part of the student. The various phases of the study have been categorized and language has been made as simple as possible. A glossary of terms has been included as a handy reference to this particular text, and the word definitions of the glossary are based on those of standard music dictionaries.

My reasons for wishing to bring out an edition of music which has already been published hundreds of times, are fourfold. First, based on a study of other editions of the Bach Sinfonias, there has been an attempt to attain a higher degree of accuracy in transcription of the music from the 1723 manuscript to modern notation. Hopefully, accuracy has been achieved here through careful proof-reading and through a study of the most recent findings of musicologists. (One of the most widely used editions of the Sinfonias contains over eighteen mistakes in notation.) A second reason for this publication is the desire to bring together into one book related and pertinent but relatively inaccessible information. A third reason is the desire to present both text and music in the same publication rather than, according to established tradition, necessitate recourse to outside sources. The final reason for this edition is to accentuate the three voices of each of the Sinfonias for the purpose of greater comprehension by the use of colored notes. Isolation of the individual melodic line was of such great importance to J. S. Bach that his students were obliged to write out the alto and tenor voices of four-part chorales, each on a separate staff between a given soprano and bass in order to acquire observance of the rules of good musical taste, which in his opinion consisted of the awareness of a smooth, independent, flowing melodic line. To insure the independence and individuality of each voice, he taught his students that the separate lines of a melody were to behave "as if they were persons who conversed together like a select company. If there were three, each could sometimes be silent and listen to the others till it again had something to the purpose to say."[1]

Although color-differentiation may in a few instances break up continuity of voice-flow in performance, as for example in Sinfonia I, measure 20, right hand (r.h.) where the phrase begins in the soprano and terminates in the alto, it is hoped that the beneficial aspects of the use of colored notes will compensate for this infrequent difficulty.

I wish to express my gratitude to Mr. Otto R. Ortmann for reading my manuscript, for his encouragement, critical help, and many valuable suggestions. I wish to thank Dr. Konrad Wolff for inspiring me to write the textual material of *Bach Sinfonias: History and Performance,* and for his assistance with the various areas of performance. I also wish to thank Dr. Brooke Peirce for reading my manuscript; Mr. Eli Krul, music editor; Mrs. William Eberling, assistance with German translation; the Library of Congress music staff; Mr. James Jones and W. Reginald Watkins, F.R.S.A., N.S.A.L., reproduction procedures; and the many others who have helped with the later stages of this publication.

DIANE CARLINER

[1] Hans T. David and Arthur Mendel, *The Bach Reader* (New York, 1945), p. 330.

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The insignia on the front cover
is from a seal ring used by Bach.

Why Study the Sinfonias?

J. S. Bach partially answered this question himself in the preface to the 1723 manuscript of the Inventions and Sinfonias. Translated from the German, it reads as follows, "Forthright instruction, wherewith lovers of the clavier, especially those desirous of learning, are shown in a clear way not only (1) to learn to play two voices cleanly, but also after further progress (2) to deal correctly and well with three obbligato [essential] parts, moreover at the same time not only to obtain good musical *inventiones* [ideas], but also to carry them out well, but most of all to achieve a song-like manner of playing, and thereby acquire a strong foretaste of composition."[1]

An acquaintance with the Sinfonias will reveal that Bach's opinion of his own work was a very modest one. The Sinfonias are far more than ordinary teaching pieces. Only true genius could have created such subtle variety of style and feeling within the limitations of one instrument, four octaves, three melody lines of small tonal range, major and minor key systems, and rhythmic continuity.

Nevertheless, in spite of the benefits that may accrue from a study of these compositions, many people dislike them. After learning a few Two-part Inventions many students desire to take up either the French Suites, Preludes and Fugues, or other Bach works which, for the amateur have more status in the hierarchy of technical proficiency, less obvious dissonance, and provide more opportunity for dramatic interpretation. This has also been my personal experience. I was reluctant to study the Sinfonias because they seemed boring, and it was not until after much research that I began to discern the depth and scope of these compositions.

Although the technique demanded for performance of the Sinfonias and the concentration required for comprehension of the musical ideas in them are a good preparation for the study of works which are pianistically more advanced, the Sinfonias should be looked upon not as mere exercises but as the expression of an imagination filled with unending creativity and with musical ideas that never cease to fascinate.

The student should follow the composer's wishes by playing in a *cantabile* or singing style, even where *non-legato* is indicated. He should obtain a smooth, flowing, technique by keeping the fingers close to the surface of the keys. See section on Fingering and Phrasing, page 23.

Sinfonias or Three-part Inventions?

There has been confusion about the title of the Sinfonias. They first appeared under the name of *Fantasias* in the *Clavier-Büchlein vor Wilhelm Friedemann Bach,* "Little Keyboard Book" for Johann Sebastian Bach's oldest son, dated 1720, Cöthen, Germany. The original order of the keys of the

[1] J. S. Bach, *Inventionen und Sinfonien Faksimile nach der Urschrift* (Frankfurt, n.d.), preface.

Fantasias is C major, d minor, e, F, G, a, b, B flat, A, g, f, E, E flat, and D. The c minor composition is missing. The Fantasias are preceded by the fifteen Two-part Inventions, each of which appears under the title *Praeambulum.*

In 1723 J. S. Bach rearranged the Praeambulas and Fantasias in a separate edition, changing their titles to *Inventio* for the two-part compositions and *Sinfonia* for the three-part. The order of keys of the Sinfonias in the 1723 manuscript is the one appearing in this edition.

The name Three-part Inventions was coined by Johann Forkel (1749-1818), Bach's first biographer.[1] The famous German publishing company of Peters printed the Sinfonias under the title of Inventions in their 1840 edition, and the name was further adapted and popularized by some of the German music critics who lived after Forkel. There is some justification for the use of the name Invention, because in the introduction to the 1723 manuscript, Bach places both the two- and three-part compositions in the same category by expressing the wish that students "learn to play two voices cleanly and also after further progress learn to deal correctly and well with three obbligato [essential] parts"[2] and at the same time obtain good musical *inventiones* [ideas]. However, the term Sinfonia has been used here throughout in compliance with the appellation of the final manuscript.

The Inventions and Sinfonias are often linked by musicologists because there are fifteen of each of them, they are in corresponding keys, and there is a resemblance between a few of the themes of the Inventions and Sinfonias of the same key. Furthermore, a manuscript known as the Fischhoff edition in which each Invention was followed by the Sinfonia of the same key was circulating for quite some time before musicologists realized that it was not in Bach's handwriting. In both the 1720 and the 1723 manuscripts Bach places all of the Inventions together and follows them by all of the Sinfonias. The change of name of the two-part compositions from Praeambulum to Inventio is further proof of Bach's desire to separate the two classes of compositions.

A careful listening to the compositions of the "Compare and Contrast" selections which are listed below the individual Sinfonias will reveal that in many cases there is as much similarity between these compositions and their Sinfonias as between the Sinfonia and the Invention of the same key, and in some cases there is more. Consequently, it is not to be assumed that any individual Sinfonia is the latter half of an ensemble which must be forced into an interpretation which would relate it to a two-voiced predecessor. The Sinfonia is an entity and should be interpreted accordingly.

Form and Form-Harmony Relationship

People have tried to categorize the Sinfonias as one or the other of the two most elementary forms in music—either the binary or ternary song form. Actually, these pieces can be best understood when viewed as one-part polyphonic compositions in which a single theme is continuously developed in nearly related keys within a single rhythmic pattern of duple or triple meter. Sectional divisions do exist, but Bach nearly always avoids definite breaks within the composition. Cadences indicating the completion of key cycles frequently do not coincide with the termination of the structural sections, and there is usually no cessation of rhythmic drive at the end of a key cycle or at the close of a structural section.

[1] Margarete Reimann, "Inventionen und Sinfonien", *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart,* Band 6 (Kassel, 1957), pp. 1383-1389.

[2] Faksimile edition, *loc. cit.*

The form and the form-harmony relationships of the Sinfonias will be outlined here in general terms, as an overall understanding of them will enable those who are not familiar with the technique of analysis to grasp more quickly the complexities involved. The elements of the formal structure are:

1. *Exposition*—Presentation of the theme in the three different voices (e.g. Sinfonia I, measures 1-4).
2. *Development*—Statement of the theme in different keys. Theme and secondary material may be altered by augmentation, diminution, interpolations, or other fugal devices. See section on Contrapuntal Devices page 20, also Sinfonia I, measures 4-18.
3. *Coda*—The closing section which is in the main key. The beginning theme is usually restated, previously presented melodies are recapitulated from any part of the composition in old or new combinations. A variety of material is frequently combined with the theme either before or during the final cadence (e.g. Sinfonia I, Measures 19-21). Only the closing section of Sinfonia XI actually duplicates its opening section.

The formal structure of the Sinfonias may be visualized as three segments of variable length. The key cycles, or harmonic cycles (H.C.), which are subject to variation in length, may be visualized as below, e.g.:

Ex.	Dev.			Coda
H.C.	H.C.	H.C.	H.C.	H.C.

or perhaps

Ex.		Dev.				Coda	
H.C.	H.C.	H.C.	H.C.	H.C.	H.C.	H.C.	H.C.

The harmonic cycles consist of forays into nearly-related keys. The first move from the tonic or main key is always to either its relative major or minor key or to the major or minor key built on the dominant tone. Each harmonic cycle is closed out by a cadence, after which a new cycle may begin. The pattern is repeated until the closing section with its return to the original key. The harmonic cycles may be analyzed more easily by working backward from the cadence. The cycles vary in length.

There is some evidence of irregularity in the form-harmony relationship in every Sinfonia—a Baroque imbalance in the relationship of harmonic phrase to formal structure. For example, in the exposition of Sinfonia I in C major the second entry of the theme makes a brief excursion into the dominant key (G) and then returns to the tonic. The entry of the third and lowest voice, measure 5, is repeated one octave lower before the exposition key has completed its course, thereby causing an irregular extension in length of the exposition and creating a more or less one-key exposition. By contrast, in Sinfonia II in C minor the second key, E flat, is firmly established (working backwards from the cadence) throughout measures 5 to 8 of the exposition. The third statement of the theme occurs in a third key, G minor, thus creating a three-key exposition.

Such irregularities in the form-harmony relationships are too numerous to be mentioned here and may be examined on an individual basis according to the needs of the student. They are deliberate, for Bach by his very existence demonstrated that the regularity of form of the academicians was frequently a sign of musical sterility.

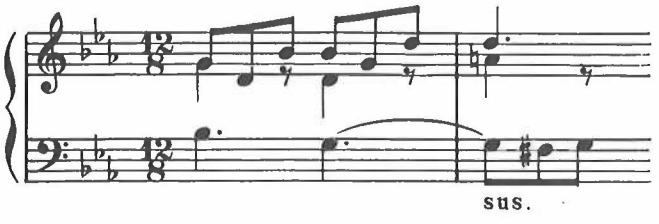
The overlapping of the harmonic cycles and termination points of the formal structure adds an elusive quality to the Sinfonias, but at the same time bestows upon them an aura of intensity, as do the play of light and shadow of the key changes, the oneness of rhythmic pulse, and the unity of spiritual character. Bach has here cast aside the rambling, improvisatory structures of many of his Germanic predecessors.

J. S. Bach's Harmony—"Sometimes it doesn't sound right!"

Often a student beginning a study of the Inventions and Sinfonias will sight-read up to a certain point, stop, and then say, "I think I've hit a wrong note." Rechecking the music he will find that no mistake has been made. With a polite shrug of the shoulders he will continue merrily on without realizing what actually took place.

Many of us have learned to play the piano or other instruments by studying music written in the harmonic language of the eighteenth-century composers. It is this Classical style which gives the I, IV, V, I cadence, squared-off phrase-endings, and the comfortable sounds of "sweet harmony" to which we have become accustomed in hymns, traditional folk songs, and Christmas carols.

Bach also uses the I, IV, V, I formula; a careful analysis of any Sinfonia will reveal cadences. But Bach's harmony is full of variety. Firstly, there is the matter of dissonance, an unrestful or discordant sound which needs to be resolved. There are innumerable examples of dissonance in the Sinfonias in the employment of the suspension—a tied note forming part of a chord is held over for the purpose of dissonating on a strong beat before resolving downwards and stepwise. The following example of a suspension is taken from Sinfonia II, page 37, measures 11 and 12:



Bach also uses dissonance on passing notes, notes which pass between parts of a chord. See Sinfonia VI, page 48, measure 35.

When used properly, dissonance can be a very exciting part of music. It may be used to express emotion or add an interesting twist to a resolution phrase. Dissonance has been used in Sinfonia VI, measure 35, for the sake of variety and to give a dramatic quality to the music. The dissonance here is particularly noticeable because it has been preceded by more consonant or sweet-sounding passages.

A second way in which Bach's harmony differs from the Classical is the method of modulation—the change from one key to another. A common practice among composers such as Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, and Chopin is that of moving to different keys within one composition. When Bach modulates to a new key, he does not do so directly. He adds extra chords. Frequently, instead of modulating distinctly to one key, he uses chains of transient modulations to several keys.

For example, in Sinfonia XIII in A minor measures 7-13 represent a modulation from the key of E minor in measure 7 to the key of A minor in measure 13. Instead of moving directly to the key of A minor, there is a digression to (1) the diminished chord on C sharp, (2) the D minor chord which is the fourth step of the A minor scale, (3) the diminished chord on G sharp, (4) the A minor is implied in measure 12, (5) the cadence on E major, the dominant chord of the A minor scale, and finally (6) the A minor chord. Many examples of round-about modulation can be seen in the Sinfonias.

There is yet a third factor which contributes to the distinctive sound of Bach's harmony and to the existence of so many accidentals or notes not included in the key signature. It is the interchangeable use of a variety of scales and modes within the framework of a single composition. Modes are the scale patterns based on Gregorian Chant.

Bach seems to have written the Sinfonias during a transitional period in the history of music, in which there was a gradual change-over from the old church modes to the major-minor key system. The combination of the two harmonic practices contributes to the richness of Bach's music. The modes were employed in music writing until several decades before and after 1722, at which time the major-minor harmonic system was codified by Jean Rameau in his *Traité de l'Harmonie.*

There are, for example, at least six different scale patterns in Sinfonia I (in the following, angles delineate half steps; all other intervals are whole steps):

Mixolydian mode, measure 1,

the familiar *major* scale in the inner voice, measure 2,

a descending *pure minor* scale, measure 7,

an ascending *melodic minor* scale, measure 13,

a descending *Dorian* scale, measure 13,

a descending *Phrygian* scale, measure 18.

Other examples of scale patterns can be found in other Sinfonias.

In the interchangegable use of different modes and scales, Bach is akin to many twentieth-century composers—Igor Stravinsky being one of the more famous—who have also employed medieval modes and are constantly on the lookout for a variety of scale patterns.

A harmonic analysis of the individual Sinfonias will result in a more polished performance in the long run. However, if this is not possible, one would do well to locate the cadences of each composition.

Bach's Melodies

At first hearing, the melodies of the Sinfonias may seem unusual, especially when compared with those of traditional songs, a Chopin nocturne, or the Liebestraum of Liszt. However, a brief analysis of some of the traditions of Baroque music will help to give a greater understanding of these melodies.

The Sinfonias contain a variety of figurations or patterns which are found in the earliest keyboard music of fourteenth-century Europe and sixteenth-century England. Figurations are melody patterns which have been interspersed with repeated notes, passing notes, or parts of a chord. On paper they form a pattern such as the *Alberti bass*, named after the composer Alberti, in the piano sonatas of Mozart, e.g., the accompaniment in the Sonata in C major, slow movement, K. 545. Since originality in composition was not a goal of the Baroque composers, speed of production and ability to please the aristocracy were of more vital concern, figurations were borrowed and exchanged by many composers up to and through the time of the late Baroque. Bach's immediate predecessors, the German Lutheran composers, made great use of figurations in the variation form (Johann Froberger, 1616-1667) and in improvisatory church music (Dietrich Buxtehude, 1637-1707).

Figurations probably first evolved from a trial-and-error process on the part of composers who were interested in exploring the possibilities of their instrument, whether the organ, virginal, or other types of clavier. The figurations found in the Sinfonias seem to represent a sampling of motivic patterns which were idiomatic to specific musical instruments or employed in specific musical forms. This can be seen in the examples which follow.

Before analyzing J. S. Bach's use of figurations in the Sinfonias, however, it is necessary to relate that, with the exception of Sinfonia IX in F minor with its "sobbing motif" and descending chromatic second counterpoint, devices which are found in Baroque cantatas, the figurations are components of *absolute* rather than *programmatic* music. They are not, taken either singly or in combination, symbols for the expression of specific emotions or ideas.

Even though there is nothing in Bach's personal correspondence or in the memoirs of other important Baroque composers to indicate a desire to communicate pictorial symbols in abstract instrumental works, Albert Schweitzer discovers all sorts of symbolism in Bach's absolute music. According to Schweitzer, groups of ascending triplets such as those found in Sinfonia VI in E major symbolize a flight of angels; the triplets with repeated notes of Sinfonia XV in B minor depict the motion of water, etc.[1] One may say, however, for example, that Sinfonia III in D major sounds joyful, but it does not symbolize joy alone.

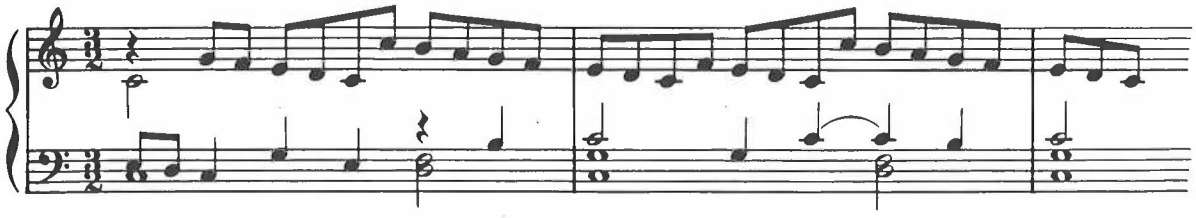
Although similar figurations are found both in Bach's cantatas and other vocal and instrumental music of the Baroque, no historical indication has been given of a direct textual connection between

[1] Albert Schweitzer, *J. S. Bach* (New York, 1911).

the Sinfonias and other Baroque works. The fact that the same figurations occur in a number of Bach's works indicate merely that they are characteristic of his style in general.

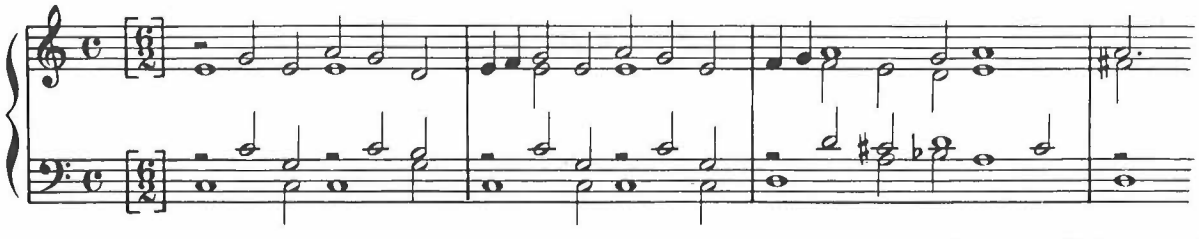
Although it is known that Bach had access to some of the compositions from which the following excerpts are taken, it is not known whether or not he had access to all of them. The following excerpts are intended merely as style studies and should not be considered to be the direct sources from which Bach received his inspiration.

The themes of Sinfonia I and X contain scale passages, a device idiomatic to the earliest keyboard music. Scales are found in abundance in the organ music of Western Europe. They are found in profusion in K. F. Paumann's *Fundamentum Organisandi*, a collection of organ music of fourteenth-century Germany. They are also found in much of the organ music of the Baroque and especially in the music of Dietrich Buxtehude, a composer whom Bach personally visited and greatly admired. Scale passages are also found in abundance in the music of the English virginalists of the Renaissance. The descending scale passages in Sinfonia X in G major, measures 16-19, are reminiscent of the pealing of carillon bells, each scale beginning one note lower. Carillon-like figurations also occur in Bells by William Byrd, measures 13-15.[2]



Characteristic of music for brass instruments is the figuration of the theme of Sinfonia VIII in F major with its intervallic skips of a third and fourth and its diatonic harmony. The F major key is also characteristic of brass music. An example of the imitation of a brass instrument applied to keyboard music is A Hornepype by Hugh Aston, dating from about 1510.[3]

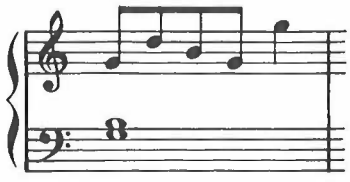
Another brass-like musical pattern is found in The Hunt's Up, by William Byrd.[4] This means that the hunt is in progress in Elizabethan English.



The prominent trumpet theme of the first movement of the Brandenburg Concerto II in F major, 1721, J. S. Bach, definitely resembles the themes of Sinfonia VIII.

[2] J. A. Fuller-Maitland and W. Barclay Squire, *The Fitzwilliam Virginal Book*, Vol. I (New York, 1963), p. 276.
[3] Johannes Wolf, *Music of Earlier Times* (New York, n.d.), p. 63.
[4] Fuller-Maitland and Squire, Vol. I, p. 218.

The figuration of Sinfonia XI in G minor is typical of the arpeggiated patterns found in lute music of the Renaissance which were applied to the keyboard, especially in Italy, as can be seen in the following measure taken from a toccata by Andrea Gabrieli (ca. 1520-1586).[5]



The repeated bass figure of Sinfonia V in E flat major, somewhat in the character of an *ostinato*, resembles a lute figuration also, as noted by Busoni in his edition of the Sinfonias,[6] but in the time of Bach the bass was generally played by a harpsichord or by one of the varieties of bass viols then in existence.

The stepwise combinations of eighth and sixteenth notes found in the themes of Sinfonia III in D major and Sinfonia XIV in B flat major are typical of patterns found in the two upper voices of the Baroque *sonate a tre*, sonatas for three instruments or three groups of instruments, the lowest voice of which is a figured bass. It is known that Bach admired certain Italian trio sonatas as copies of them have been found in his handwriting. Some musicologists feel these sonatas were his source of inspiration for the Sinfonias.[7]

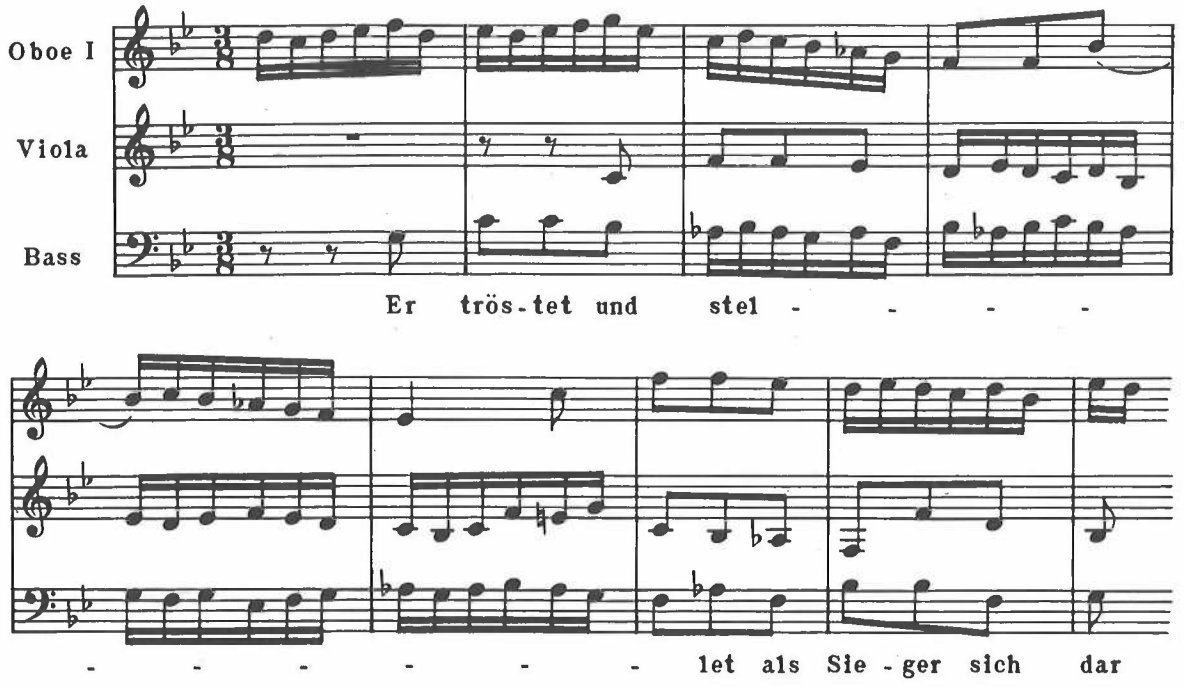
The following figuration of stepwise eighth and sixteenth note patterns is taken from a trio sonata by Tommaso Albinoni (1674-1745).

[5] Charles Van Den Borren, *The Sources of Keyboard Music in England* (London, n.d.), p. 138.
[6] Ferruccio Busoni, *Fifteen Three-part Inventions by J. S. Bach* (New York, 1926), p. 14.
[7] Reimann, *loc. cit.*

In Sinfonia XII in A major the lowest voice of measures 10-12 and 20-23 appears to be a modified form of the Alberti bass. Harmonically simpler repeated patterns are found in the music of the sixteenth-century English virginalists and perhaps even earlier. The following excerpt is from The Woods so Wilde by Orlando Gibbons.[8]

Patterns resembling a kind of rudimentary Alberti bass also occur in the keyboard music of the German composers who lived closer to the time of Bach than did the English virginalists. Below is a figuration taken from the F major toccata for organ by Johann Pachelbel (1653-1706) who served as a musical influence in Bach's life.[9]

In the theme of Sinfonia II in C minor, the lyrical and unusual combination of an unembellished broken chord of eighth notes followed by *episodes* of sixteenth notes in stepwise motion which appears for the first time in measures 5-6 can be found in the cantata *Ein Herz, das seinen Jesum lebend weiss,* (A Heart that knoweth Jesus still doth live) *Er tröstet,* etc.



The most illuminating source of study of the figurations of the Sinfonias is probably to be found in J. S. Bach's cantatas. Here, especially in open score wherein the part assigned to each instrument may be seen in combination with a vocal text, a clearer idea may be obtained of the inspirational forces which were at work in the creation of the Sinfonias. There is enough similarity in the composi-

[8] Fuller-Maitland and Squire, Vol. I, p. 145.
[9] Gerard Alphenaar, editor, *Organ Masters of the Baroque Period,* Vol. I (New York, 1948), p. 51.

tional techniques employed in both classes of composition to lend an added interest to the Sinfonias, which are so often conceived merely abstractly.

A final thought must be added to the study of the melodies of the Sinfonias. Although they do contain figurations that were used from the dawn of keyboard music through the late Baroque (1750), Bach's synthesis of imaginative harmony, compact formal structure, and unity of mood of each individual composition makes these works truly original, as does his idea of presenting instrumental techniques in a series of three-part pieces for the clavier in an ascending order of keys. Most of the non-Bach compositions examined here are definitely inferior to those of Bach. With the exception of the Italian trio sonatas, these lack motivic development, purposeful structural organization, and variety of harmony.

Contrapuntal Devices

Although Bach enjoyed writing fugues—compositions based on the development of a single theme in different voices—he did not run the technique into the ground by employing every device of fugue writing in the same composition, nor did he use the devices in strict key relationships. Below are listed some of the contrapuntal techniques found in the Sinfonias.

Subject (theme)—Enters in one of three voices, e.g. Sinfonia VIII.

Answer—Theme enters a fourth above the first entry, Sinfonia VIII, measures 2-3.

Second answer—Measures 3-4.

Countersubject—An additional part which is first heard while the answer to the theme is played, Sinfonia III, bass of measure 3, third beat, through measure 5.

Augmentation—A doubling of time values. Augmentation occurs in Sinfonia I, measure 1. The four opening sixteenth notes of the upper voice are imitated in eighth notes in the bass.

Diminution—The time values of the notes are shortened, usually halved. In Sinfonia VII, measure 25, the inner voice is a rhythmic diminution of the upper voice.

Episode—A section which digresses from the main theme and is interpolated between two appearances of it for the sake of variety. Sinfonia II makes great use of the episode, e.g. measures 5-9. Bach is known to have criticized other composers' fugues for being monotonous through not containing episodes.

Inversion or *Mirror*—An ascending melody is made to descend; a descending melody to ascend. Inversion of the subject is typical of Sinfonia I, e.g., page 33, measure 4, beginning second beat in the bass. Inversion is also typical of Sinfonia VI, e.g., page 47, measure 17.

Stretto—Canonic imitation begins in a second voice before the previous voice is completed. The stretto technique is not characteristic of the Sinfonias in general but may be found in Sinfonia XIV, page 70, measure 12, the two upper voices.

Picardy Third—An established procedure of thus far unknown origin whereby a major third replaces a minor third in the closing chord of a contrapuntal composition in a minor key. See Sinfonias II, VII, IX, XIII.

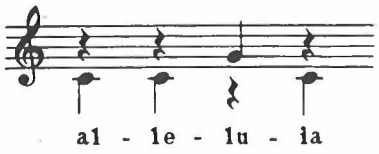
Any of the above-mentioned devices may be applied to any of the parts of a contrapuntal composition. For example, augmentation may be used in a repetition of any part of the subject, any part of the episodes, or first or second counterpoint. The same holds true for any other contrapuntal devices.

Non-Contrapuntal Devices

The Sinfonias contain a few stylistic curiosities which contribute to their marked individuality:

Supporting bass—The bass accompanying the first statement of the themes is in most instances a *continuo* of the type found in the Baroque Italian trio sonatas from which Bach is said to have received inspiration for the Sinfonias. Bach has violated an established rule of fugue-writing by the use of a bass with the first statement of the theme.

Hocket (hiccup)—A medieval device in which the melody jumps from one voice to another.



Traces of the hocket technique are found in one instance in Sinfonia XII, measure 24, right hand.

Closing chords—At the close of the individual Sinfonias the open octaves or chords with a root and a third only are reminiscent of the effect of the ethereal closings of medieval songs.

The Codas

The codas of the Sinfonias deserve special attention as each coda incorporates the essence of each Sinfonia in the concluding phrase in a different manner. By way of illustration, Sinfonia II in C minor and Sinfonia V in E flat major have extremely interesting codas. The musical ideas of Sinfonia II, measures 28 to conclusion, are taken from the episode or interlude of the exposition, measures 5-8½, occurring between the second and third entry of the theme. The same chordal and rhythmic progressions occur in both the interlude and the coda but with subtle melodic differences. Compare also measures 8½-9 with 31 and note how the melody dissolves rhythmically and harmonically into the Picardy Third in measure 32.

In the closing section of Sinfonia V, measures 29½ to conclusion, the *continuo* bass is a duplication of that of measures 1-8, the inner voice is a duplication one octave lower of the highest voice of measures 1-8, and the highest voice of the closing section is a new melody based on fragments of the two upper voices of the entire composition. Note also, Sinfonia IV in D minor, the new material of the coda in the form of an ascending and descending chromatic scale in the upper voice, measures 20 to conclusion.

Suggestions for Practice

Below are listed a few general suggestions for practising contrapuntal music—music in which there are two or more lines of melody.

1. Find the principal theme as it occurs in each voice.
2. Search for other melodies which you may eventually wish to make prominent, especially those which occur where the main theme has temporarily disappeared.
3. Practise each melody line separately, and give special attention to the passing of melody from one hand to the other in the middle voice.
4. Put together two voices at a time, first trying one combination of voices, then another.
5. Divide the composition into sections according to cadence points or smaller units. Play all of the voices together slowly. *Do not memorize any portion of a polyphonic composition until the ear and fingers have adjusted to the simultaneous playing of all the voices.*
6. Play two voices while singing the third voice.

Trio Ensembles

The tonal range of the Sinfonias is from two octaves above middle C to two octaves below middle C, with the exception of Sinfonia VI, which includes a B natural below Great C in the bass.

Ensemble groups may wish to join in playing a line of music by following a line of color. Non-keyboard instruments readily adaptable to the playing of the Sinfonias in their original form are as follows:

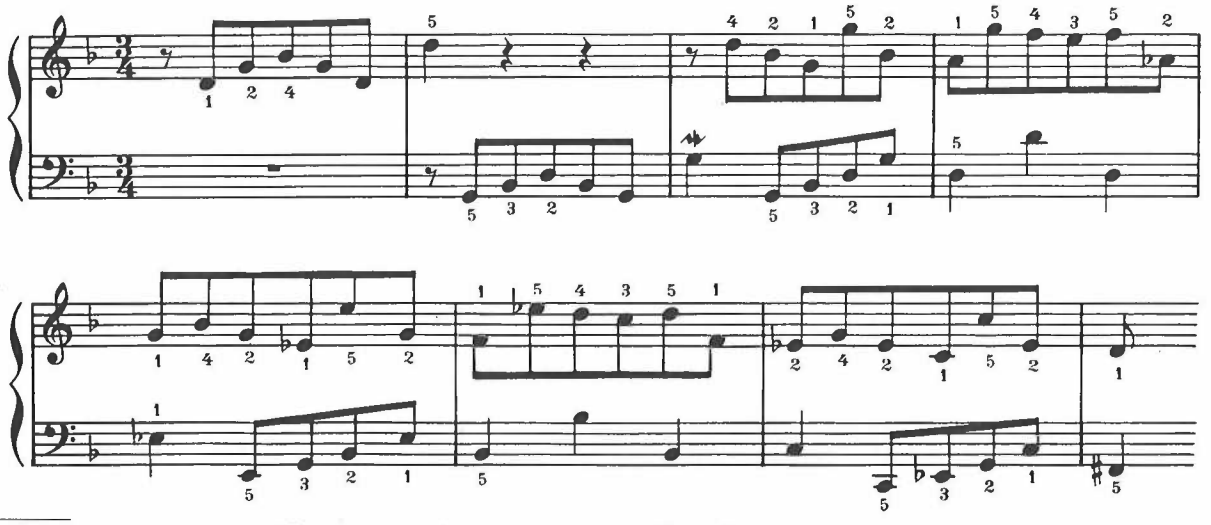
Violoncello—the two lower voices
Viola—the inner voice
Violin—the upper voice
B flat clarinet—the upper voice
Oboe—the upper voice.

Other instrumental or vocal groups may wish to play or sing the Sinfonias informally, transposing where necessary.

Fingering and Phrasing

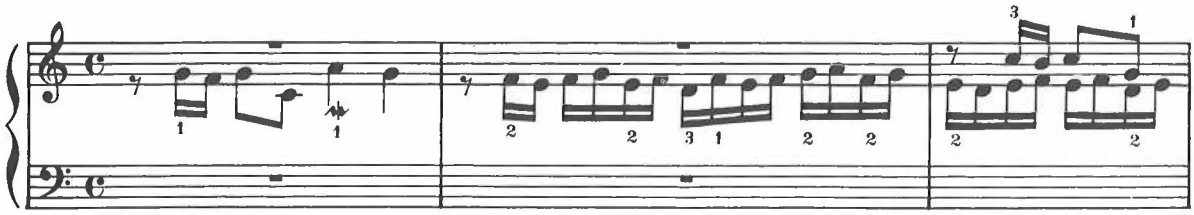
Anyone beginning a study of J. S. Bach's keyboard works should become acquainted with the three examples of fingering in his own hand as they give insight into the performance of his music. The first of these examples is an *Applicatio* (Art of Applying Fingers) found at the beginning of the *Clavier-Büchlein vor Wilhelm Friedemann Bach.*[1] It is interesting as a sample of archaic technique in which one finger crosses over another, the second over the third, the third over the fourth, etc. The *Applicatio* will not be reproduced here, as an example of archaic fingering is included in the third illustration of this section.

The second example of Bach's fingering is in the Little Prelude in G minor, also from the *Clavier-Büchlein,* p. 20, unusual for its placing of the thumb on a black key, measure 5, as reproduced below. (Bach is the first composer publicly known to have used the thumb on black keys.) The G minor Prelude is also significant because it contains fingering which strongly suggests cantabile playing. Because Bach stated in his introduction to the Inventions and Sinfonias that they be played in a singable manner, the G minor Little Prelude is of interest to a student of the Sinfonias. The following excerpt is taken from measures 1-7.



[1] J. S. Bach, *Clavier-Büchlein in Facsimile* (Connecticut, 1959), p. 9.

The third example of Bach's personal fingering is found in the Praeludium and Fughetta in C major from Book II of *The Well-tempered Clavier*, Vol. 36, pp. 224-225.[1] The relatively unmelodious pattern of the Fughetta subject indicates that this composition was probably intended for the harpsichord rather than the clavichord.

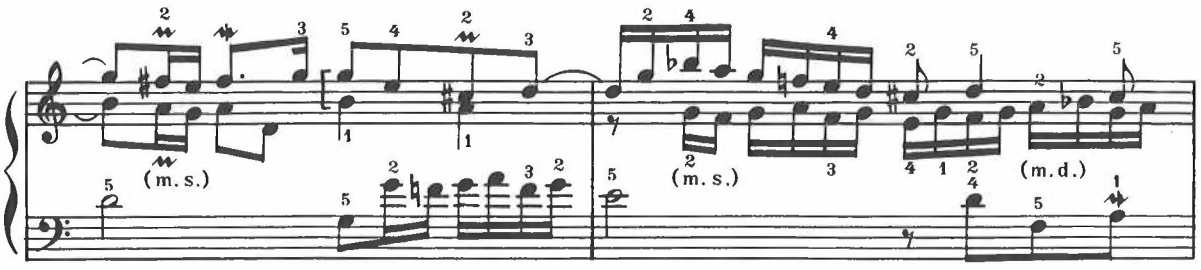


The vigorous fingering in Bach's handwriting of the Praeludium reproduced below gives an indication of the kind of phrasing to be applied to his music. Although he intended the Sinfonias to be played singably, melodic leaps and rests make an entirely legato performance a physical impossibility. Moreover, a performance without phrasing would be uninteresting and not in keeping with the Baroque tradition in which variety of articulation in keyboard performance plays so great a role. The circled numbers are my editorial indications highlighting some pertinent aspects of phrasing, but a study of the entire Praeludium would be advantageous.

[1] The *Bach-Gesellschaft.*

1. An accent on the third A of the fugue subject resulting from the adjacent use of fingers 3 and 5.
2. Leap into a sustained note, the whole-tone E.
3. Modified tremolo finger-repetition of the same fingerings in a two-note pattern.
4. Boldly masculine use of the thumb on adjacent keys.
5. Non-legato phrasing of an augmentation. See page 21 for definition of augmentation.
6. Characteristic phrasings of the Praeludium in which there are combinations of legato and non-legato. A leap into the two outer voices while the inner voices are sustained.
7. Archaic fingering. The third finger crosses over the second in the bass.

Also of interest are the indications for the left hand (m.s.) and right hand (m.d.) from the Fughetta.



The creative approach to phrasing and delight in subtlety, as seen in the Praeludium reveals an innovator at work. The student and connoisseur may draw his own conclusions from the above examples of Bach's fingering and apply them as desired. The fingerings given here for the individual Sinfonias were prepared for small and medium-sized hands and are only intended to be of help in this capacity.

Tempo and Dynamics

Indications of proper tempo, phrasing, and dynamics or "expression marks" are practically non-existent in the keyboard music of J. S. Bach, as it was assumed during the Baroque Era that those who played musical instruments knew how to interpret music without them. None of the above type of guideposts is included in either the 1720 or 1723 manuscripts of the Sinfonias, and consequently the Sinfonias present a real challenge to the musical imagination. The indications in this edition are general, allowing for some flexibility in interpretation and giving the student a chance to develop his own interpretive powers as was expected of the Baroque performers.

The more familiar indications of tempo and expression in this edition are given in Italian, and the more complicated ones in English. Coincidentally, the Baroque was a polyglot era in which interpolation of foreign words in music titles and personal correspondence was an everyday occurrence. J. S. Bach titled the ornaments in the 1720 manuscript reproduced here in the Ornamentation–Performance section in four different languages—French, German, Italian, and Latin.

Tempo

There is little precise information about the tempo of music written before 1750. The metronome had not yet been invented, and the standardization of performance directions by the Classicists such as J. Quantz in his book on flute playing had not yet begun.[1] Consequently, the question of tempo had not yet become a problem to be mechanically solved. The only indications concerning the tempo of J. S. Bach's music, save for a few rare instances when he gave them himself, were given by people living in his time, one of whom was his son, Carl Philipp Emmanuel Bach who claimed that his father

[1] J. J. Quantz, *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen* (Berlin, 1752).

played his own compositions briskly. However, many of the Sinfonias do not lend themselves effectively to a brisk interpretation; namely numbers II, IV, V, VII, IX, XI, and XIII. The rate of harmonic change of each composition gives a good indication of proper tempo.

The only other plausible guide to the tempo of Baroque music which can be applied to the Sinfonias is an explanation such as the one given by Johann Mattheson, composer, critic, and theorist in his book *Der Vollkommene Capellmeister* (The Perfect Conductor) in which he states that tempo is related to feeling. According to Mattheson, a performer should have an intelligent understanding of the composition and should aim at projecting its *Affekt*, mood or emotional message. Once an intelligent listener has heard a composition, he will know immediately whether or not it was played at the proper tempo. Mattheson permits a retardation in the final parts of a composition, but J. S. Bach's opinion in this matter is thus far unknown.

The tempo indications given here are intended as a guide to effective performance for those who do not have a thorough acquaintance with the Sinfonias. At any rate a steady metric pulse must be maintained throughout each piece, in keeping with the Baroque tradition, except perhaps at the very end, or in those rare instances where the author has indicated a fermata, to be preceded by a retardation.

Dynamics

A variety of opinions exists on the subject of the proper dynamic range and interpretation of the Sinfonias. They were probably written for the clavichord, a keyboard instrument which was well known in the Baroque Era and had a dynamic range from approximately *ppp* to *mf* on the piano. Known for its singing tone when played correctly, the clavichord was considered by the Baroque audiences to be capable of very delicate shading. More than the harpsichord, it expressed the most subtle changes of emotion and gave the hearer a glimpse into a spiritual reality beyond the immediate.

Three factors give evidence substantiating the theory that the Sinfonias were written for the clavichord rather than the harpsichord. Firstly, Bach states in his introduction to the Inventions and Sinfonias that they be played in a cantabile style. Cantabile is less possible on the harpsichord than on the clavichord. Secondly, the pitch range of the Sinfonias, four octaves, corresponds exactly to the pitch range of the clavichord excepting Sinfonia VI in E major which contains the B natural below Great C in the final cadence. Finally, the subtle interplay of the voices and the delicate expressiveness of many of the Sinfonias render them more suitable for the clavichord. Consequently, the subtle, shaded interpretations possible in clavichord music are more appropriate here than the effects of register- and manual-changing of the harpsichord. Nevertheless, certain harpsichord articulations may be imitated as long as the playing seems natural.

When interpreting the Sinfonias it is important to remember that the interest of the music lies primarily in the interplay of the different voices. Extreme volume should be avoided on the modern piano which was designed to accommodate the fortissimos of Brahms and Liszt rather than the intricacies of Baroque counterpoint. At the same time, one should be aware that Bach was a boldly masculine composer, and the performance should not degenerate into timidity in an effort to imitate the sound of the clavichord.

The dynamic ranges given here are intended as general suggestions and do not have to be strictly adhered to.

Ornamentation When Viewed Historically

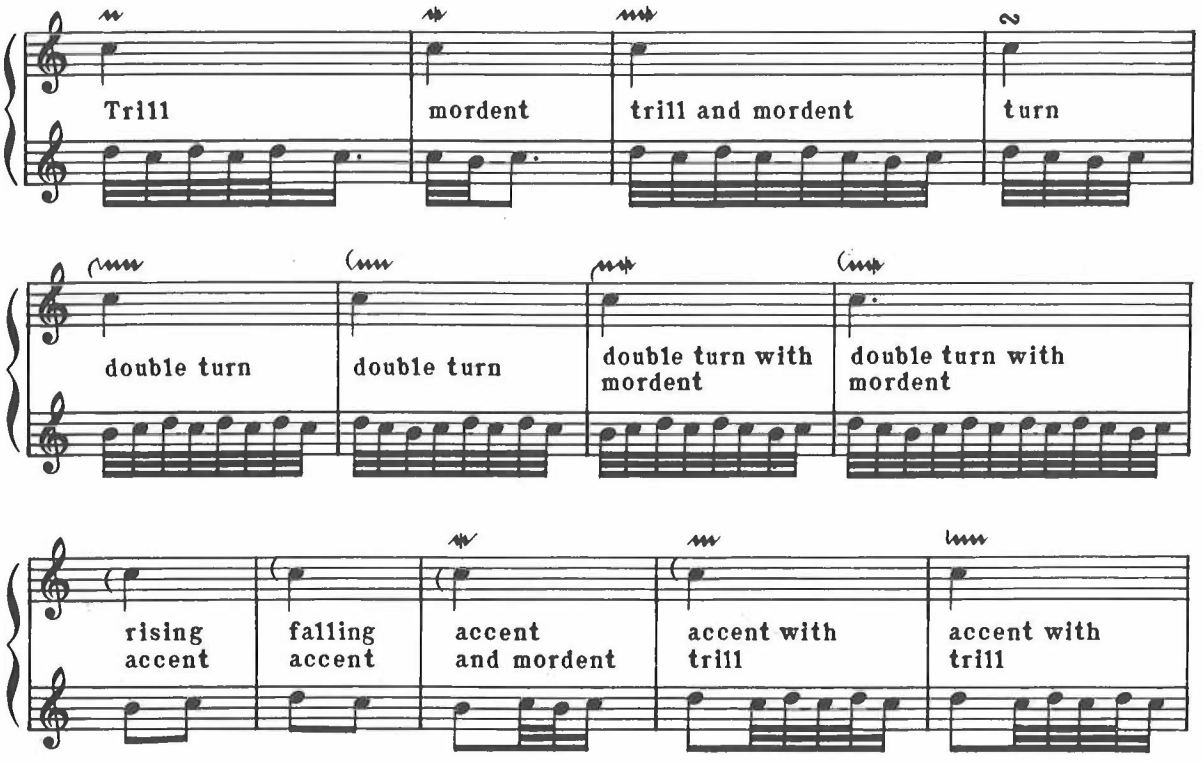
Ornaments were adapted for instrumental music in the Baroque Era as a means of imitating the trills of singers and for the purpose of emphasizing a particular note. They offered the virtuoso an opportunity to display his technique and good musical taste.

Bach's ornamentation in the Sinfonias varies in the 1720 and 1723 manuscripts; in some places ornaments are added and in others they are omitted, thus showing a flexibility in attitude.

Baroque clavier players often improvised ornaments on the spur of the moment. One of the places in which musicians considered the addition of ornaments in good taste was just before the final note of a cadence.

The problem of ornamentation in Baroque music is a complex one and the question of precise usage will probably never be solved, due to the improvisatory nature of musical performance prevalent at the time. A student of the Sinfonias should therefore assume a somewhat improvisatory attitude regarding ornamentation.

Ornamentation–Performance



Trills, turns, mordents, "grace notes," appoggiaturas, shakes and slides are collectively called ornaments. The above table of ornaments was included in the *Clavier-Büchlein.*[1]

In the Baroque Era ornaments were an important part of music. However, Baroque ornaments do not sound as effective on the piano as they did on the keyboard instruments of their day, the clavichord and the harpsichord.

[1] J. S. Bach, *Clavier-Büchlein in Facsimile*, p. 8.

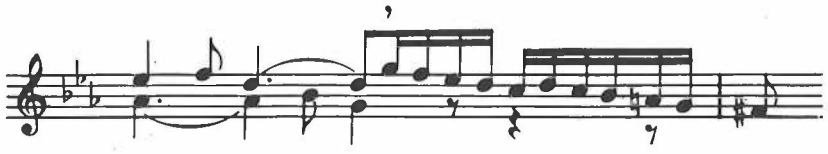
Often when a student reads through the Sinfonias he becomes bogged down while trying to fit in the trills. Rhythm becomes distorted, finger control is lost, sound quality is neglected, the "other hand" is ignored, and the student gives up in a state of frustration.

Ornaments are actually one of the less important aspects of the Sinfonias as performed on the modern piano. Most of the Sinfonias are not heavily ornamented to begin with: their greater importance lies in brilliance of compositional technique and subtle expressions of mood and emotion. Consequently, when practising the Sinfonias it may be beneficial to *leave the ornaments to the very last stages of practising* and then fit them in when it is possible to do so clearly without destroying the basic rhythm. It is unnecessary to pass up a study of the Sinfonias because of inability to execute perfect trills.

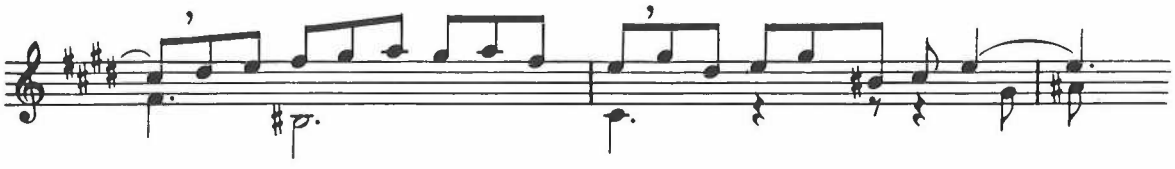
The trill and the mordent , the most frequently occurring ornaments, always begin with the upper auxiliary, the note one step above the principal note. They are always begun on the beat.

Rhythm

The rhythm of the Sinfonias is generally very regular. The time value of the tone groups is usually constant. However, agogic accents, very short musical breaths, may be taken at propitious moments for a more artistic performance, e.g., Sinfonia II, measure 8, right hand.



Sinfonia VI, measures 10-11.



For the most part consonant rather than dissonant harmony occurs on the strong beats. In order to assure proper coordination of right-hand and left-hand passages when playing up to tempo, the upper voices may be played with the notes of the bass occurring on the beat in the following manner:

Sinfonia III, measures 3-4.

However, the finding of the beat requires musical knowledge. There are irregularities, as for example in Sinfonia VI in E major. Here, the strong beats are the first and third beats of each measure, while the second beat is sometimes non-harmonic. The following example is taken from measure 22.

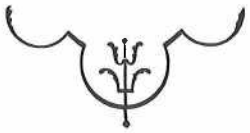
Compare and Contrast

The Compare and Contrast sections were included with most of the Sinfonias to increase the enjoyment of study. For the most part selections listed are in the same key and have the same basic rhythm as the individual Sinfonia. Some non-fugal selections were included as they are easier to comprehend at first hearing than those works which are completely contrapuntal. A pleasurable and in some cases simpler expression of the Bach spirit may inspire interest in the more complex works such as the Sinfonias, the Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue, and the Art of Fugue. The Compare and Contrast lists are by no means exhaustive.

Explanatory Comments on Sinfonias

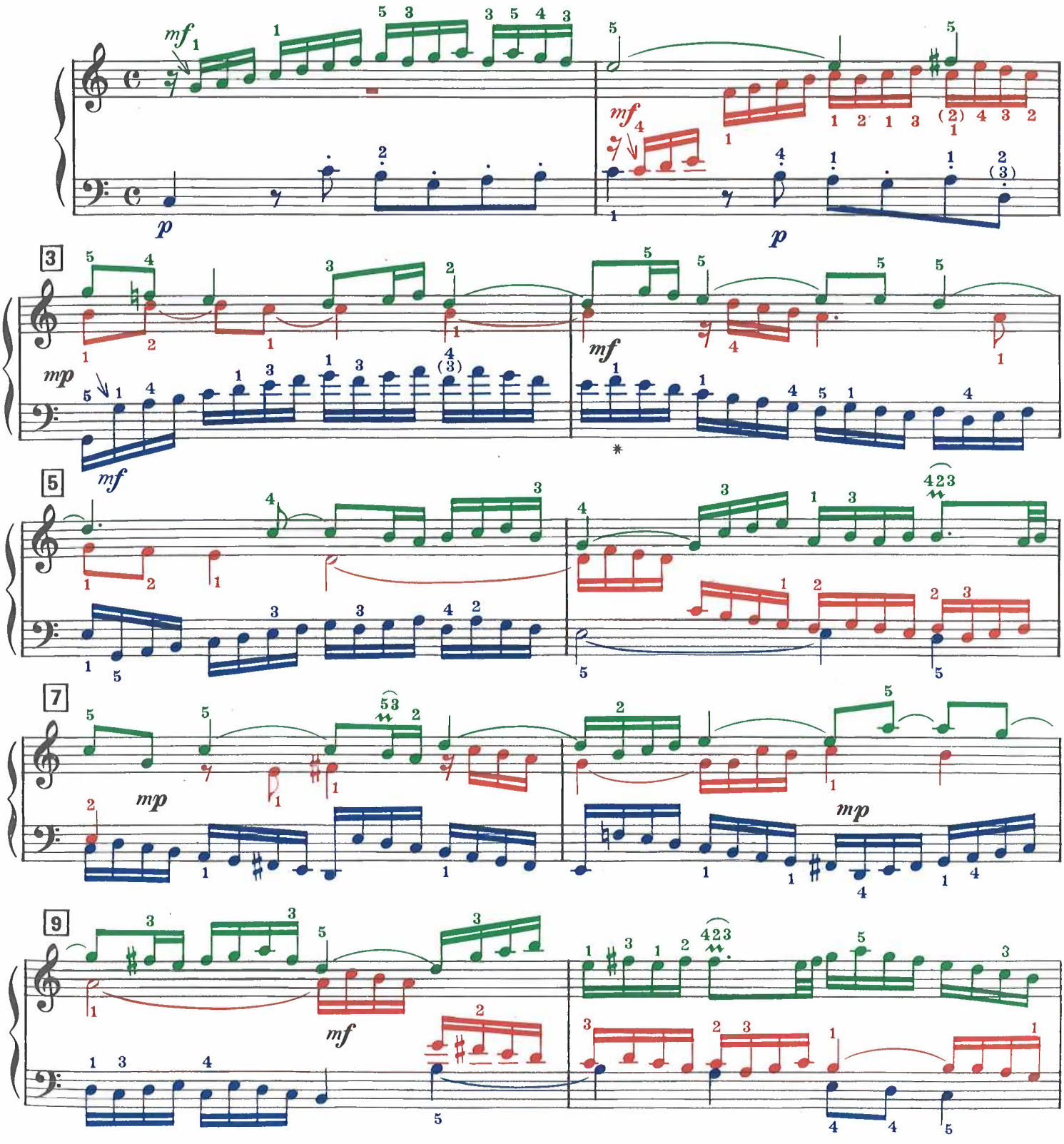
Explanatory comments follow those Sinfonias for which a special explanation was felt to be helpful for performance and of musicological interest.

THE SINFONIAS

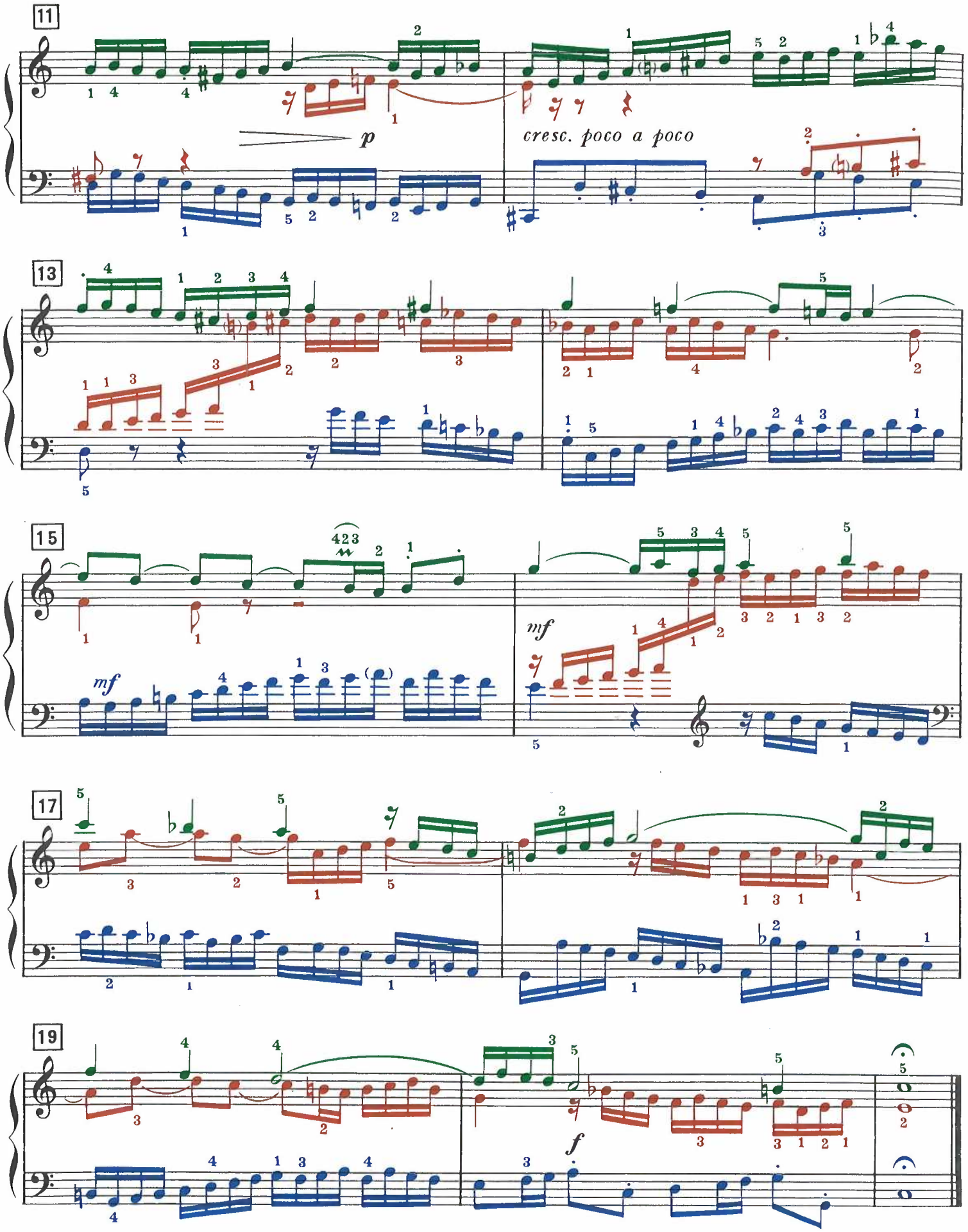


SINFONIA I

Rather fast and flowing



*Inversion of theme.



Compare and Contrast: Two-part Invention in C major, for keyboard; Third movement, Italian Concerto in F major, for keyboard.

Explanatory Comments on Sinfonia I

Sinfonia I is often the first composition studied because it is the first one in the book and is in the key of C major. Actually, it is one of the most difficult of the Sinfonias, due to the speed at which it must be played and the difficult finger positions which are necessary for performance. Numbers II, IV, VI, VII, XI, or XIII may be studied first.

Although several of the Sinfonias are in the style of a fugue, that is, a technique of writing in which there is constant imitation of a theme or parts of a theme on different pitch levels, Sinfonia I is a stylized version of pre-fugue forms such as the prelude, *canzona*, or variation form which often contained long passages of scales[1]. Scales must have been musically satisfying to the audiences of the Baroque and Renaissance as they are found abundantly in the music of both eras—times in which composers aimed to please their audience, be it an aristocratic one. Even though Sinfonia I resembles preceding works of other composers, it differs from them in the juxtaposition of theme and accompaniments, its rich harmonies and unprecedented use of dissonance in the passing notes.

When performing this composition it is important not only to emphasize the theme as it occurs in the different voices, but also to play the scale passages which flow from one hand to another and one voice to another smoothly. It would be possible to emphasize all of the scale passages on the harpsichord or clavichord but it is inadvisable to do so on the piano. The bringing out of scale passages in the bass (for example measures 7 and 8) would give a thick, unpleasant effect.

As an aid to the interpretation of Sinfonia I, Ferruccio Busoni (1866-1924), concert artist, composer, and expert in the interpretation of J. S. Bach's keyboard works,[2] suggests that the theme be divided into two sections, either of which may be utilized independently.

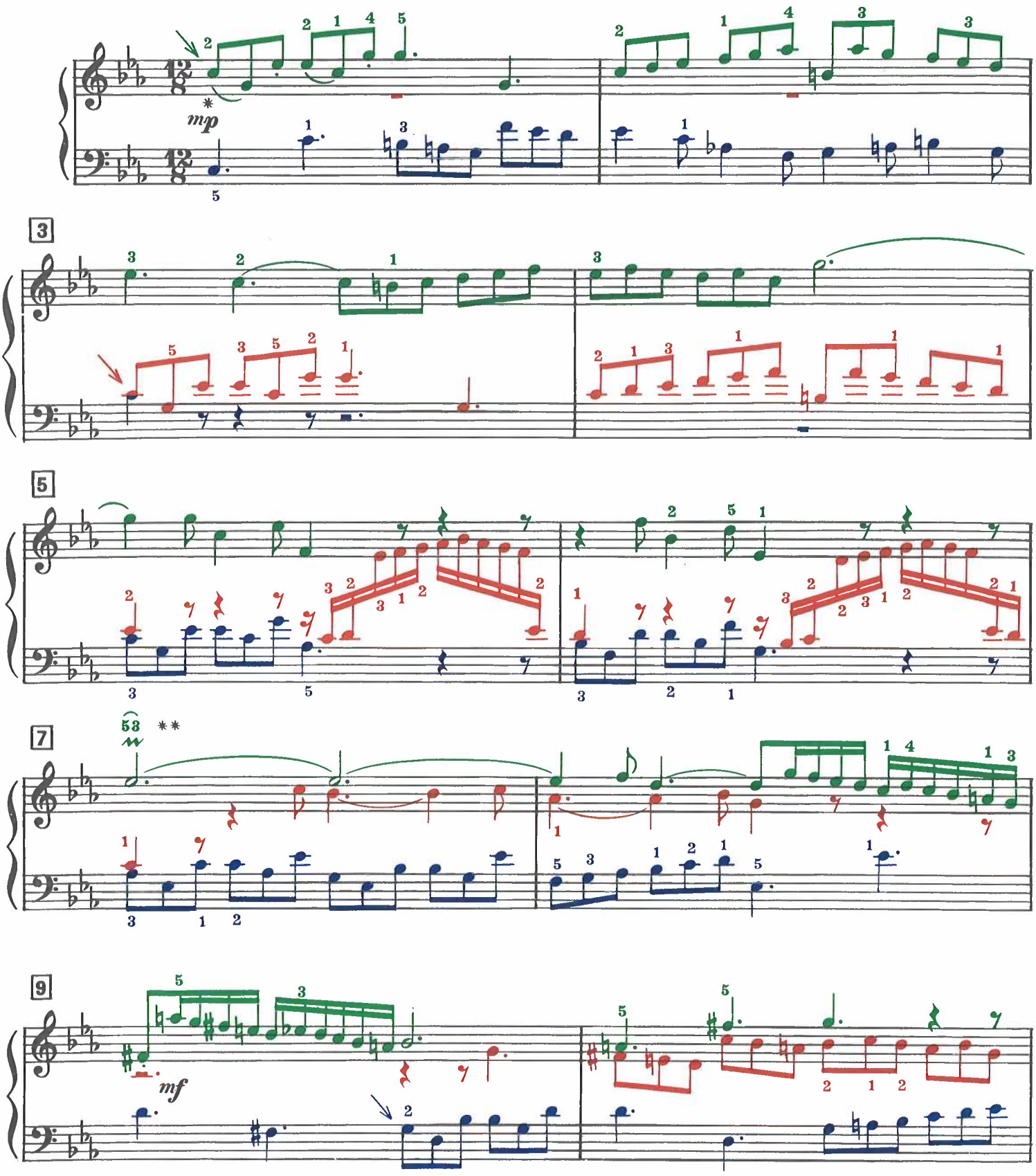
Knowledge of this division within the theme enables the student to play more musically. There may be a crescendo in Part I of the theme, and Part II of the theme may be played *p*. Also, Part I of the theme in the bass of measure 8 may be answered by emphasizing Part II of the upper voice in measure 9 rather than Part II of the bass.

[1] See *The Fitzwilliam Virginal Book*, Vols. I and II (New York, 1963), also music of D. Buxtehude, J. Froberger, J. Sweelinck.

[2] F. Busoni, *Fifteen Three-part Inventions for the Piano* (New York, 1926), p. 3.

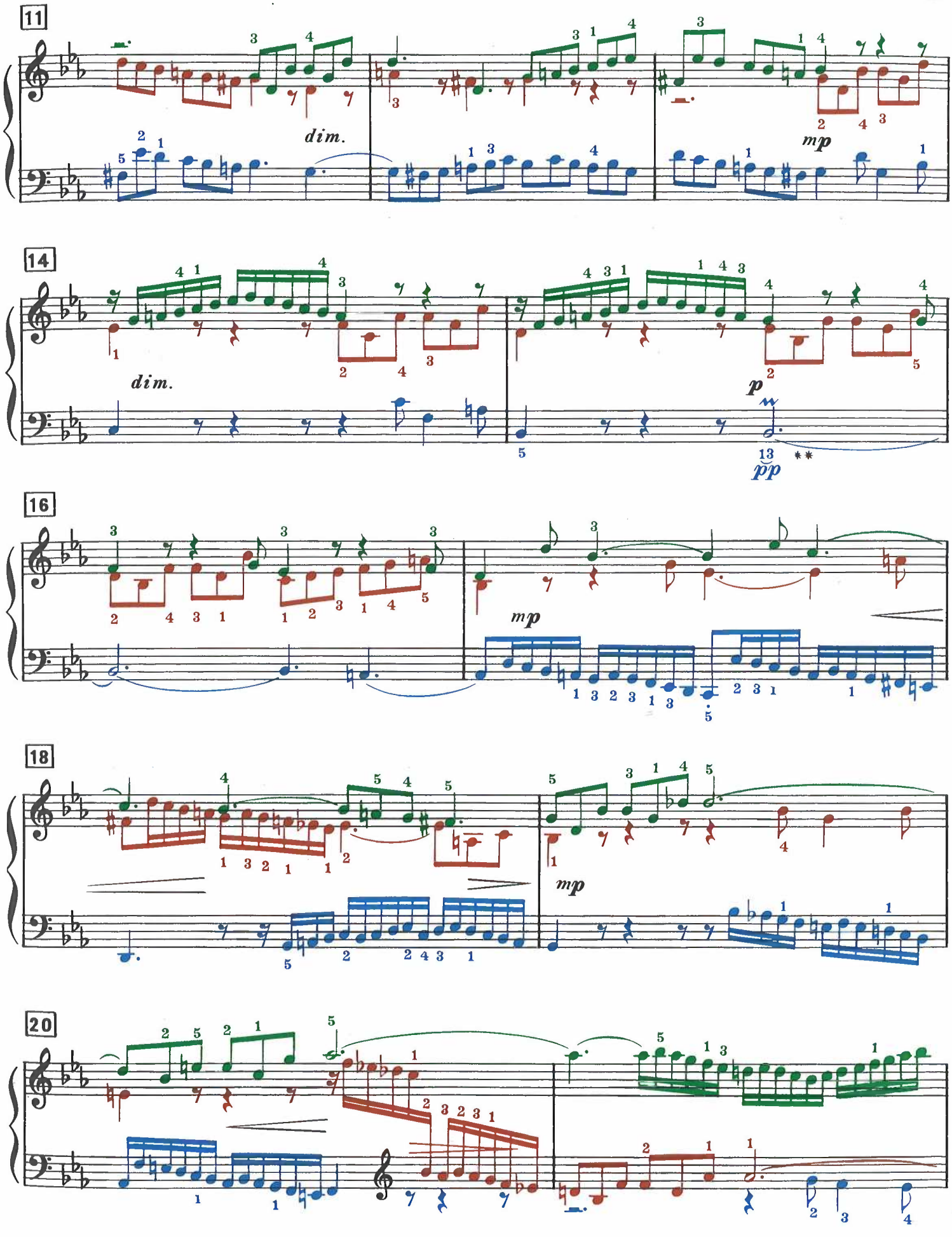
SINFONIA II

Andante cantabile



*Continue phrasing of broken chord at all theme entrances if desired.

**Trill may be continued throughout duration of E flat.



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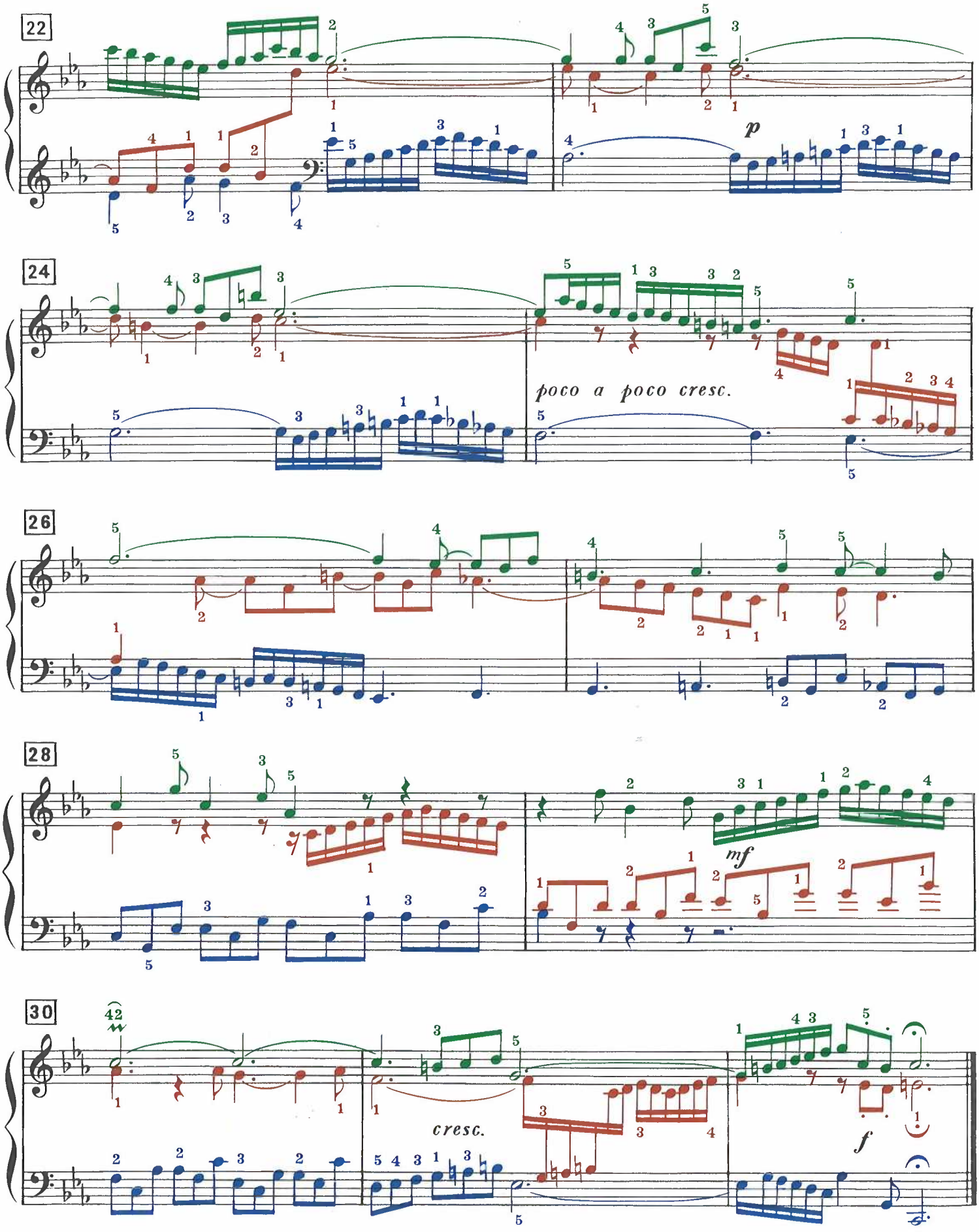
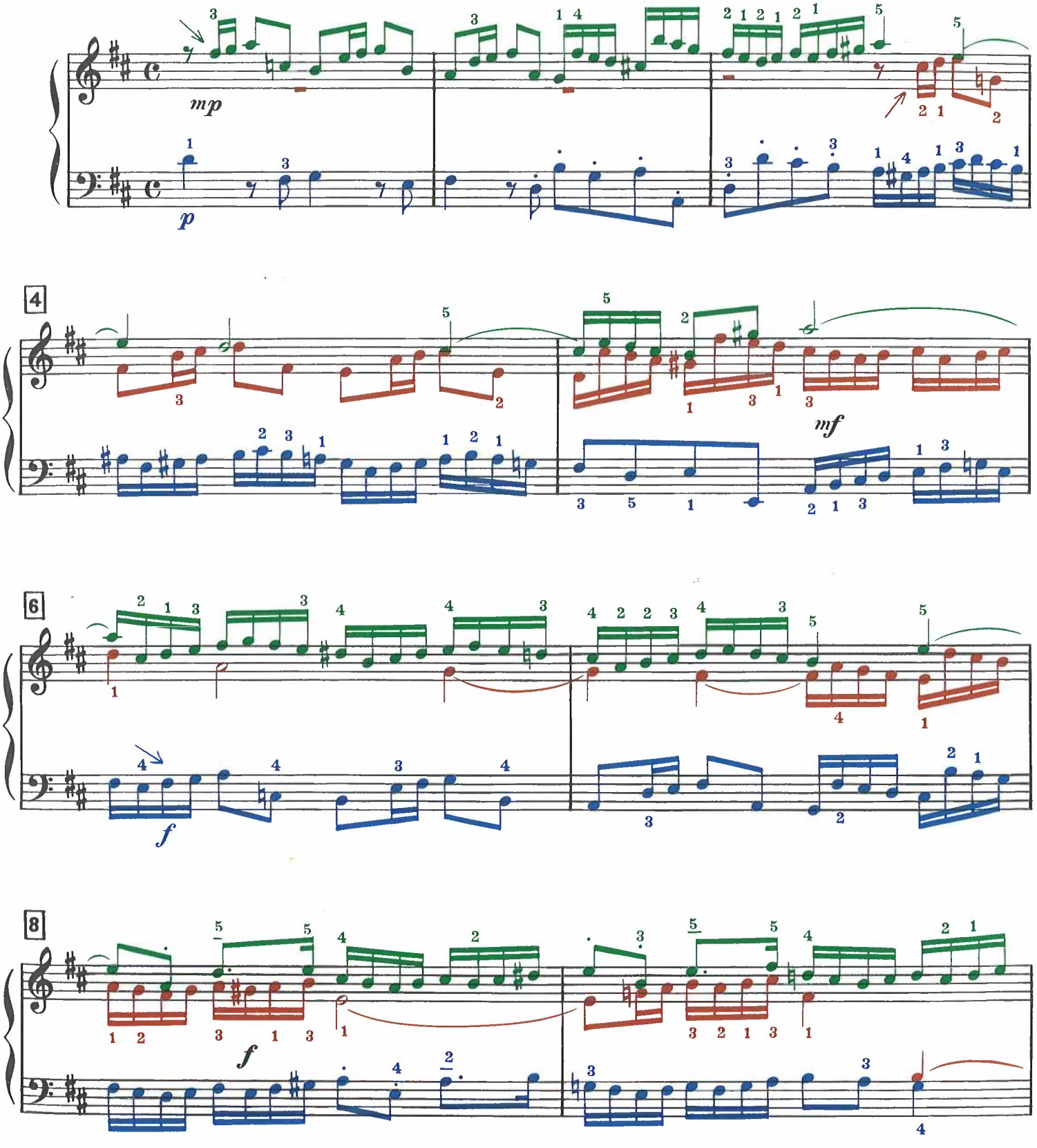


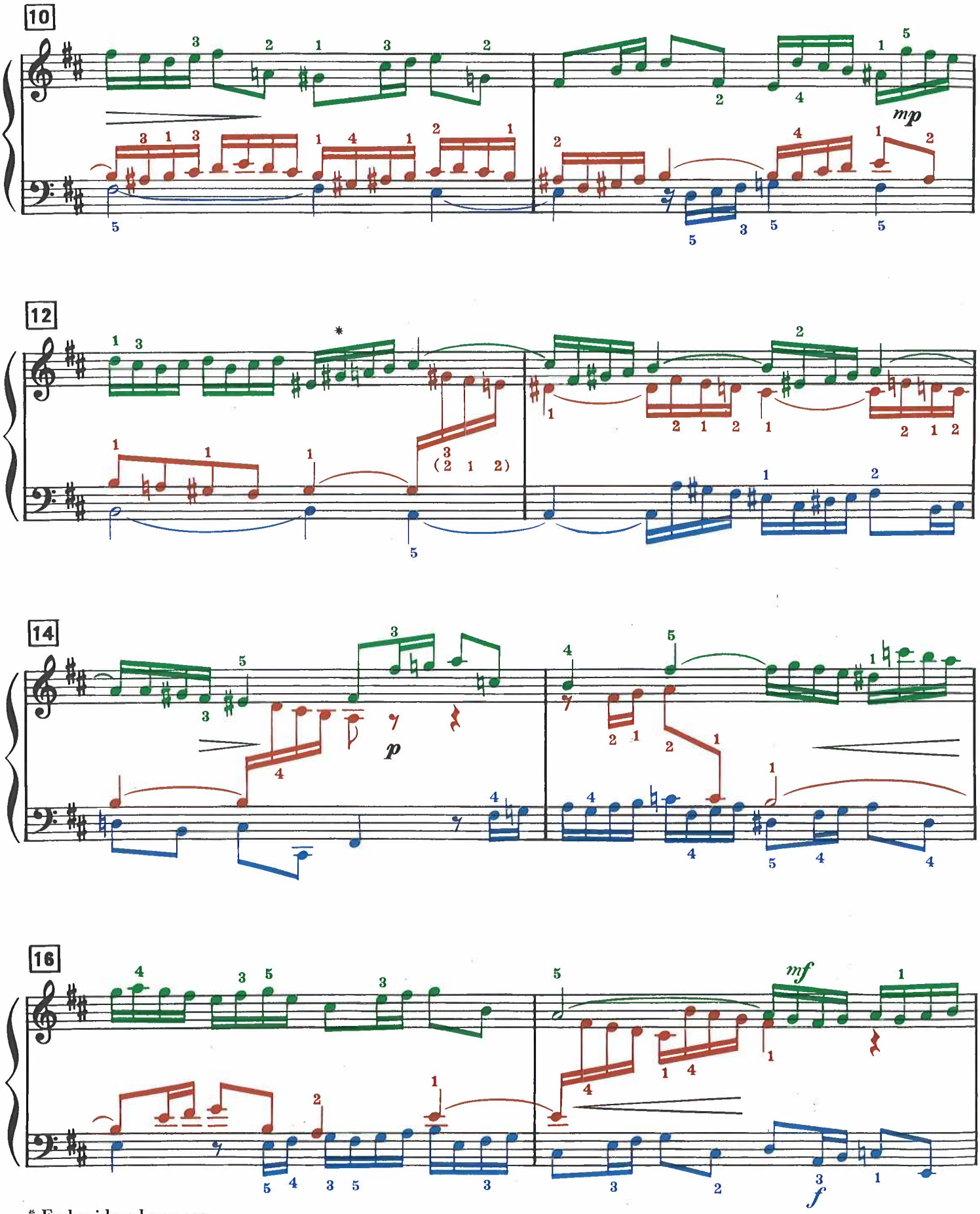
Compare and Contrast: Rondeau, Partita in C minor, for keyboard.

SINFONIA III*

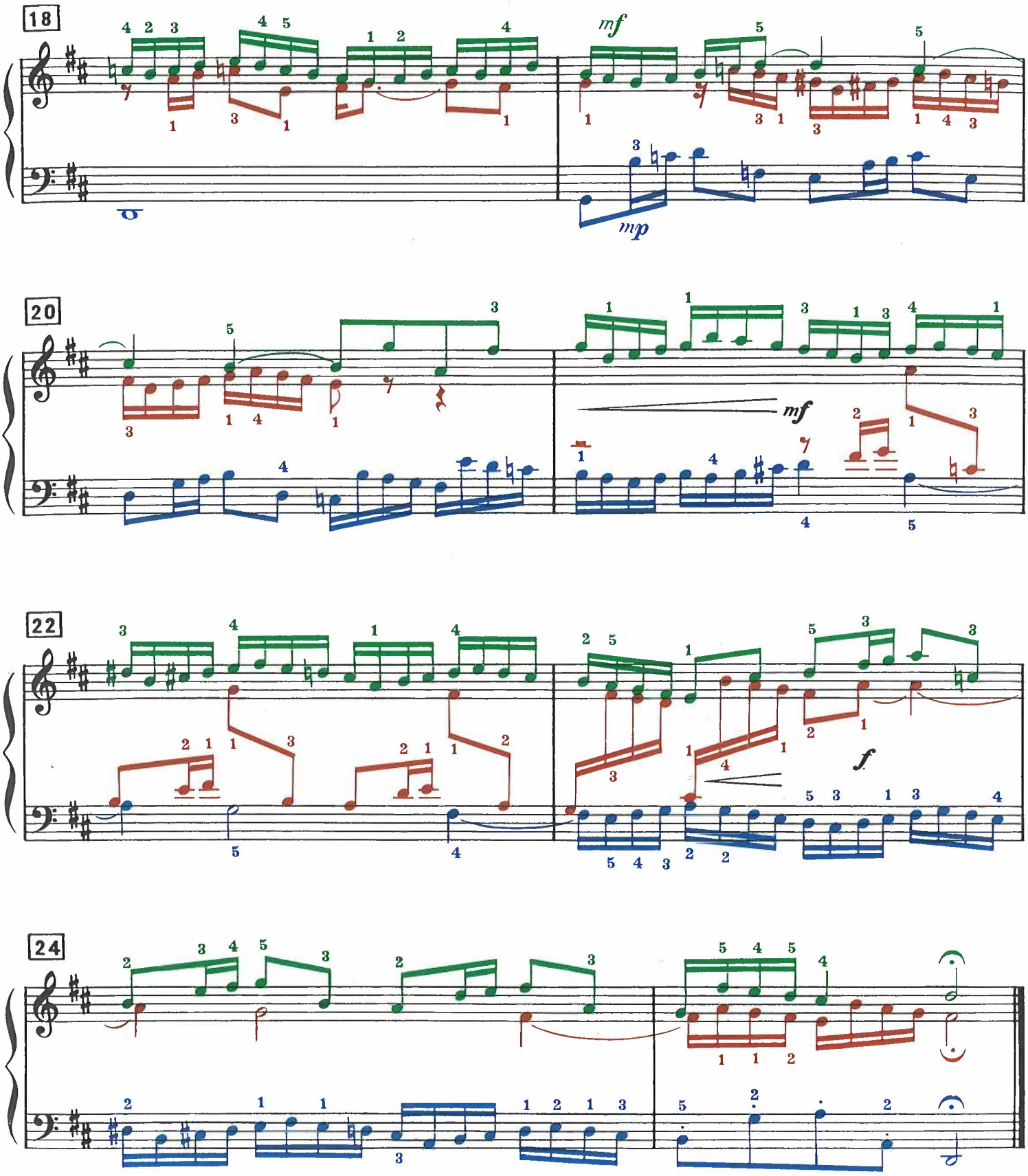
Allegretto vivace



* See section on Fingering and Phrasing.



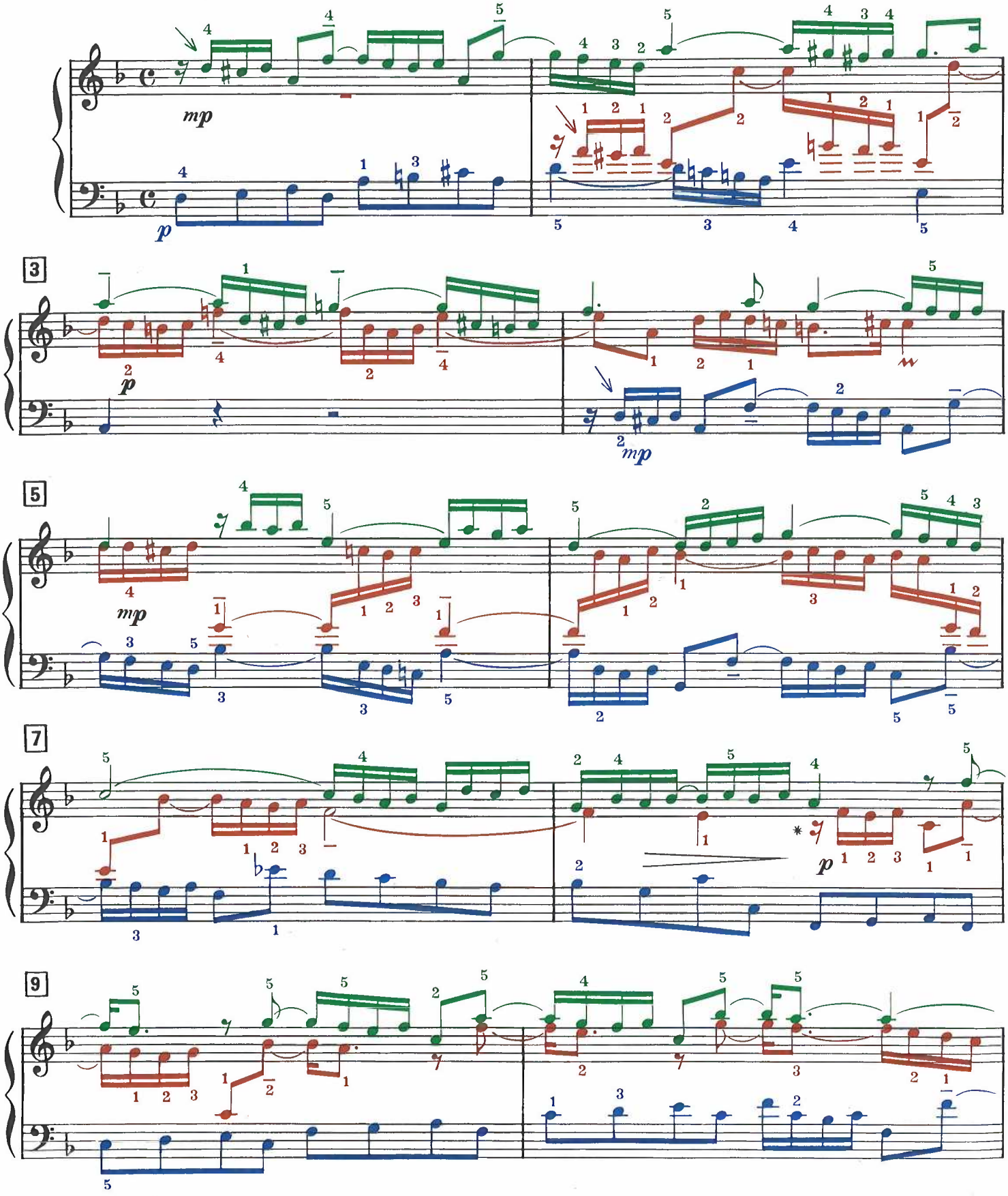
* Embroidered passage.



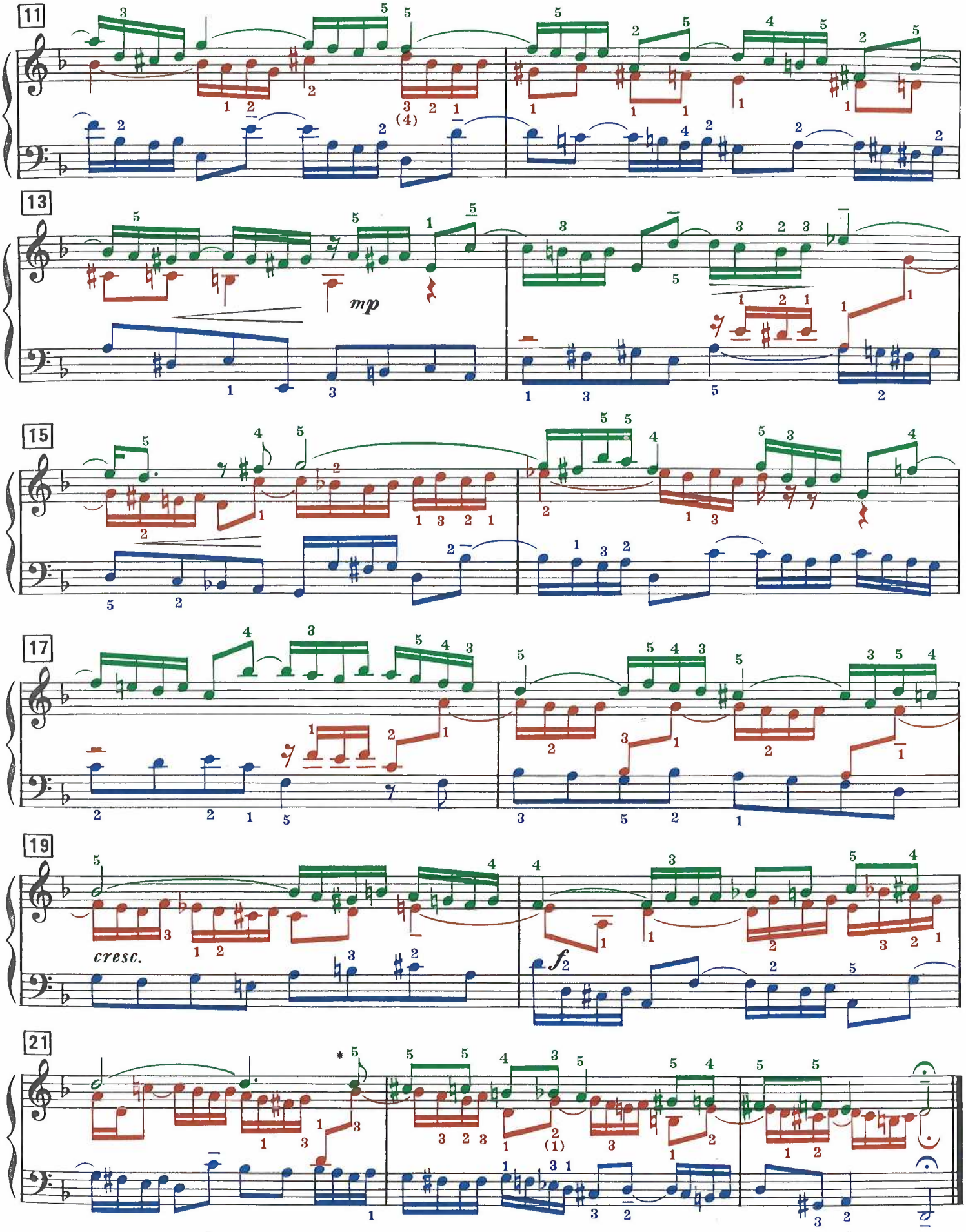
Compare and Contrast: Prelude 4 in D major, Twelve Little Preludes, for keyboard; Bourrée 1, Overture in D major.

SINFONIA IV

Andante sostenuto



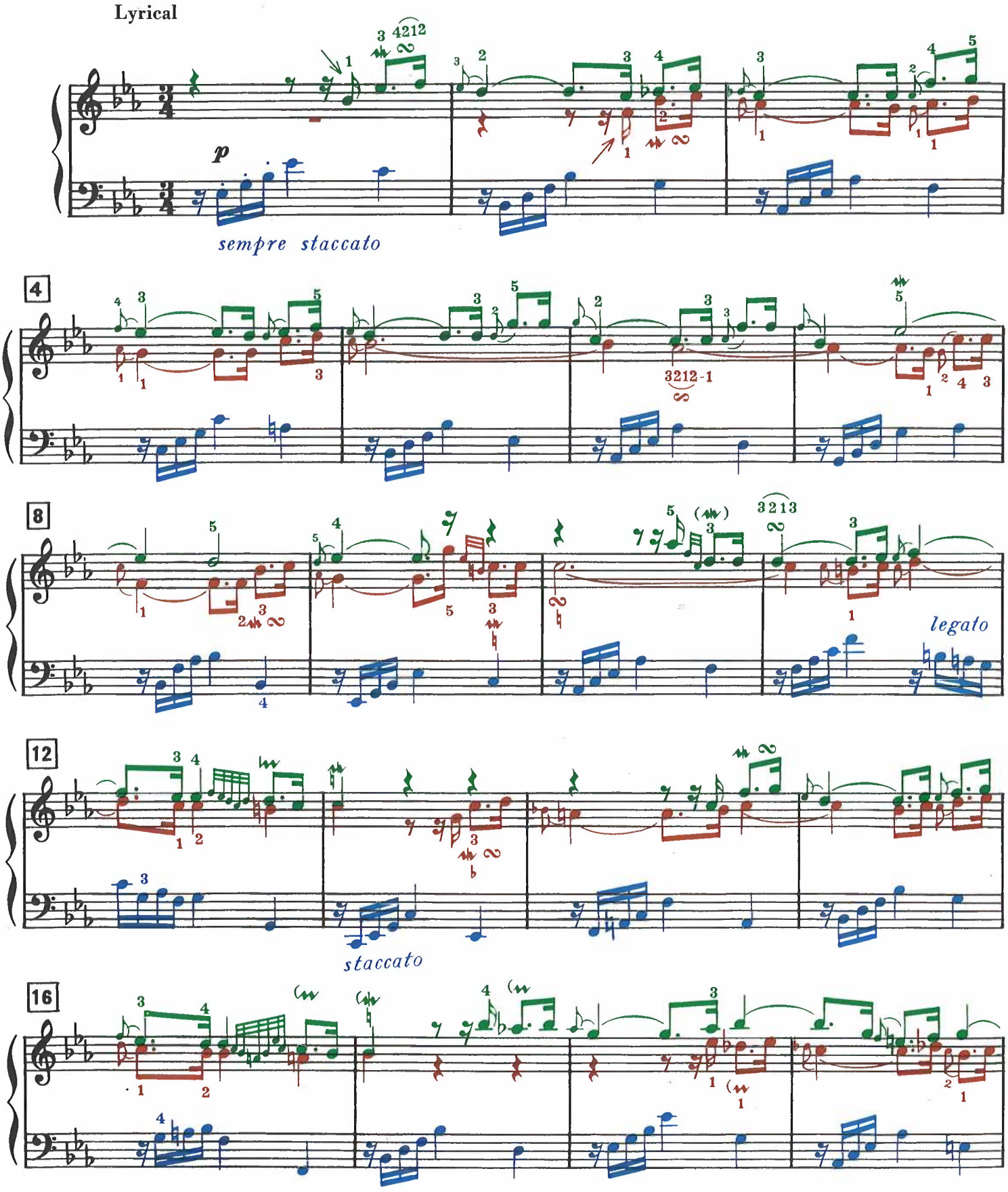
*Theme brought back in major key.

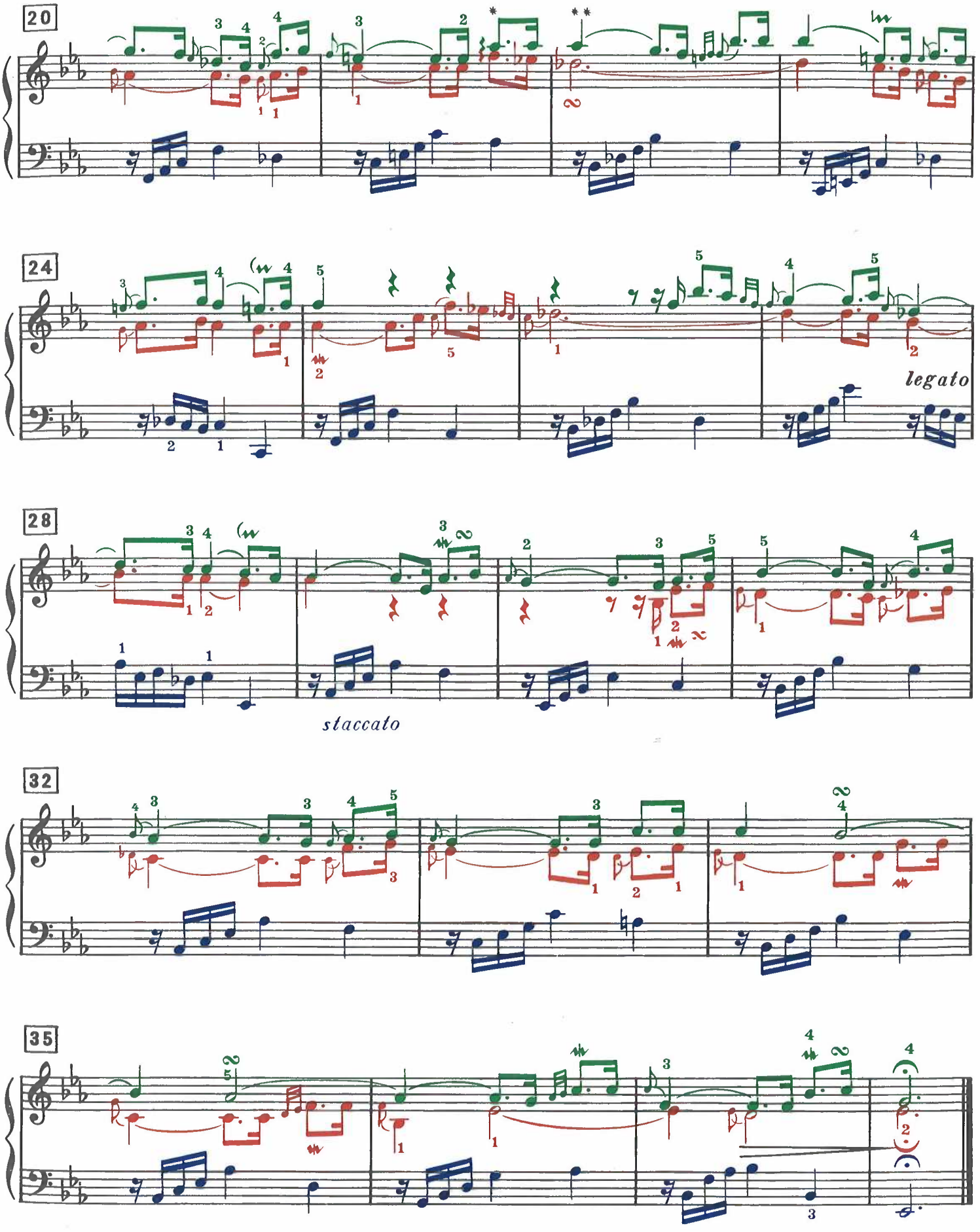


*Chromatic scale.

Compare and Contrast: French Suite in D minor, for keyboard; Choral Prelude, *Nun komm' der Heiden Heiland* (Come Saviour of the Infidels), BWV 661, for full organ.

SINFONIA V





Compare and Contrast: Prelude in C sharp minor, The Well-tempered Clavier, Book II.

Explanatory Comments on Sinfonia V

The trills, turns, "grace notes," slides, or notes in small print (collectively, "ornaments") were not originally included by J. S. Bach in either of his editions of Sinfonia V. He later added them to the second edition, 1723, probably when he was giving a lesson to a man named Heinrich Gerber. Ornamentation is essential to this composition of embellished theme and continuo bass, as aside from its expressive quality, it helps to differentiate the two upper voices.

Sinfonia V represents J. S. Bach's reconstruction of the Baroque Italian Trio Sonata for three instruments or three groups of instruments in which the bass acts as a harmonic support for two melodic lines. As mentioned in the section on Bach's melodies, page 18, it is known that Bach was well acquainted with the trio sonatas. See the Trio Sonata by Evaristo dall'Abaco in *The Historical Anthology of Music*, Vol. II, p. 180.

When performing Sinfonia V it is important to remember that the sound ideal of the Baroque was a "firm bass and a florid [highly ornate] treble."[1]

The two upper voices should be played in a delicate, expressive manner in cantabile style, with the imitative effects between them taken into account. See Ornamentation–Performance for descripition of the ornaments and .

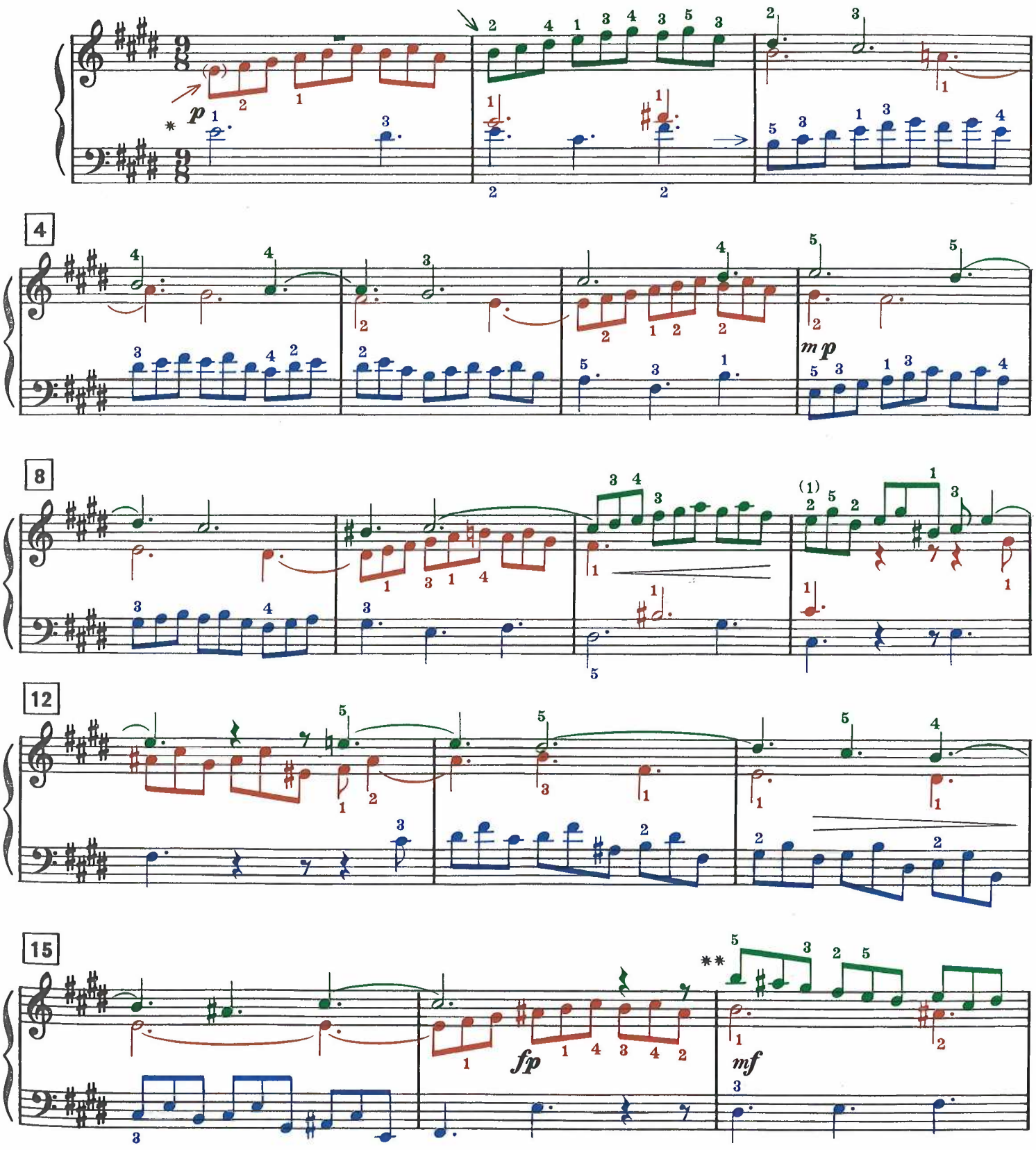
*The is probably a hastily written double acciaccatura as found in D'Anglebert's table of ornaments in his *Pièces de Clavecin* of 1689. Bach's table of ornaments as reproduced here in the section on Ornamentation–Performance appears to be a modified version of the D'Anglebert table. All of Bach's trills are shorter than those of D'Anglebert, and Bach has omitted the double acciaccatura along with a few of the other ornaments.

**Measures 22, 24, and 28 contain a few of the rare examples of phrasing found in the 1723 manuscript. Other phrasings throughout this edition are editorial unless otherwise indicated.

[1] D. J. Grout, *A History of Western Music* (New York, 1960), p. 272.

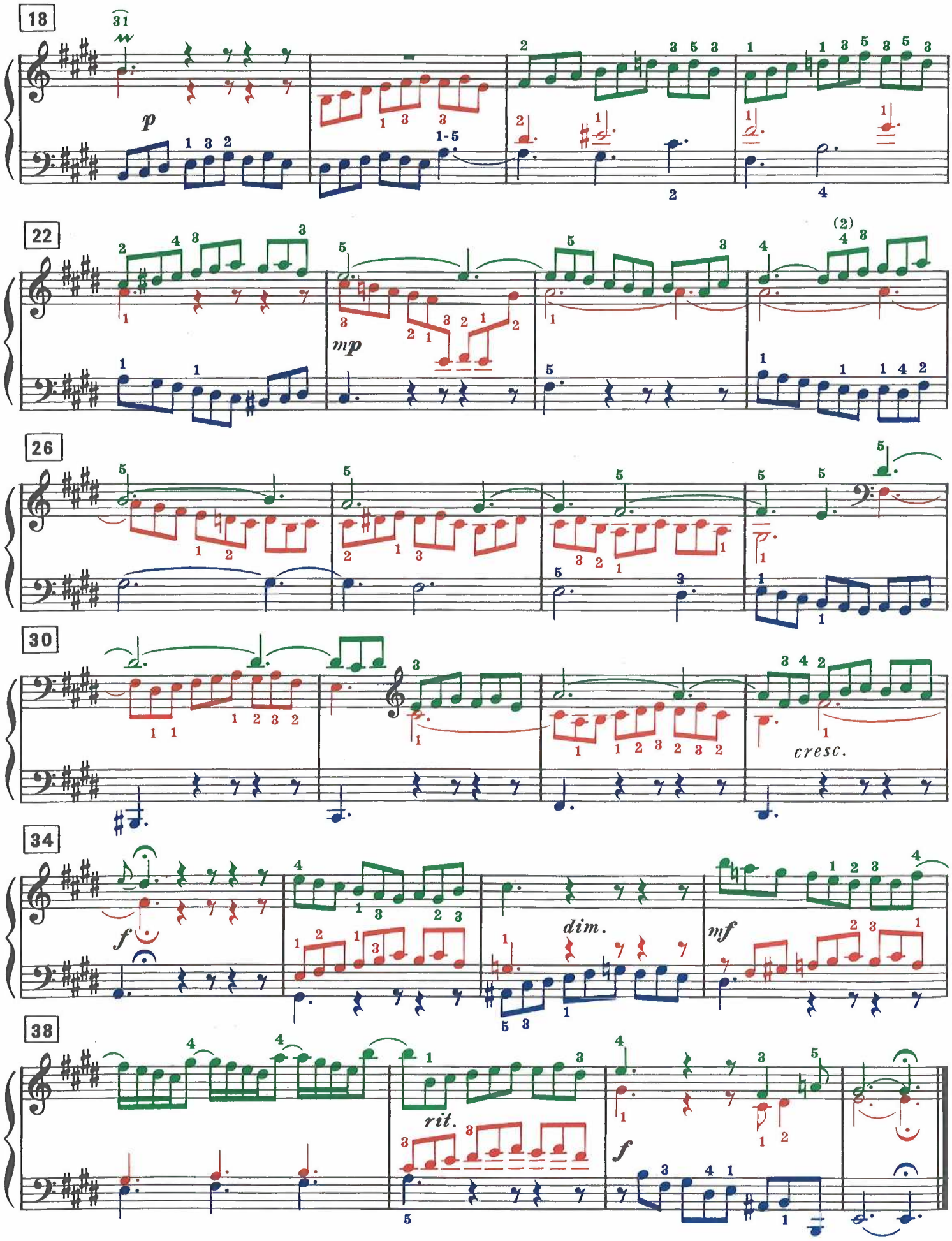
SINFONIA VI

Pastoral, animated



*Be sure to hold all sustained notes for their full value, but not beyond.

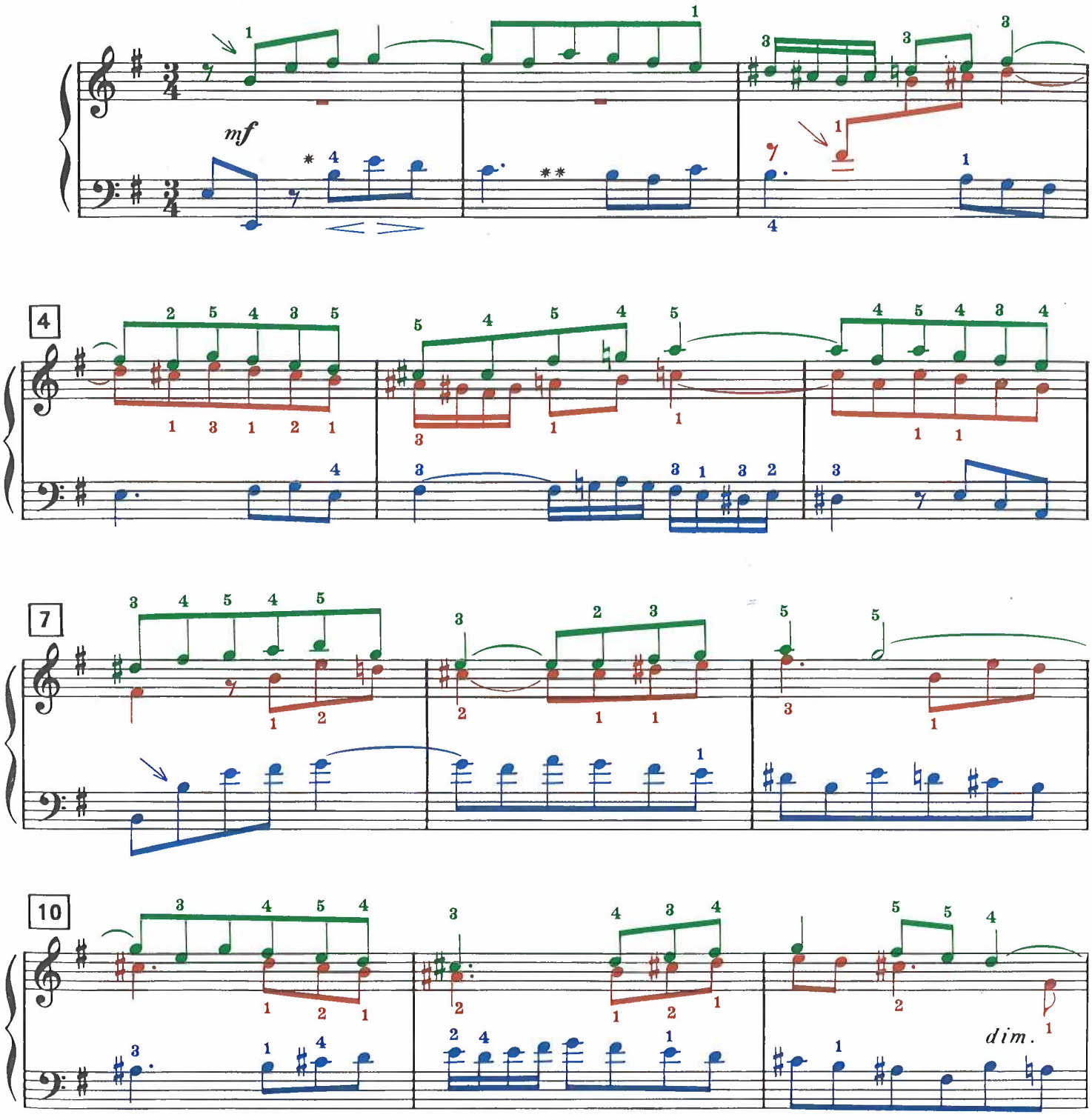
**An inversion of the theme.



Compare and Contrast: Theme of first Sinfonia; Choral Prelude, *Wohl mir, dass ich Jesum habe* (Jesus, Joy of Man's Desiring), Cantata 147.

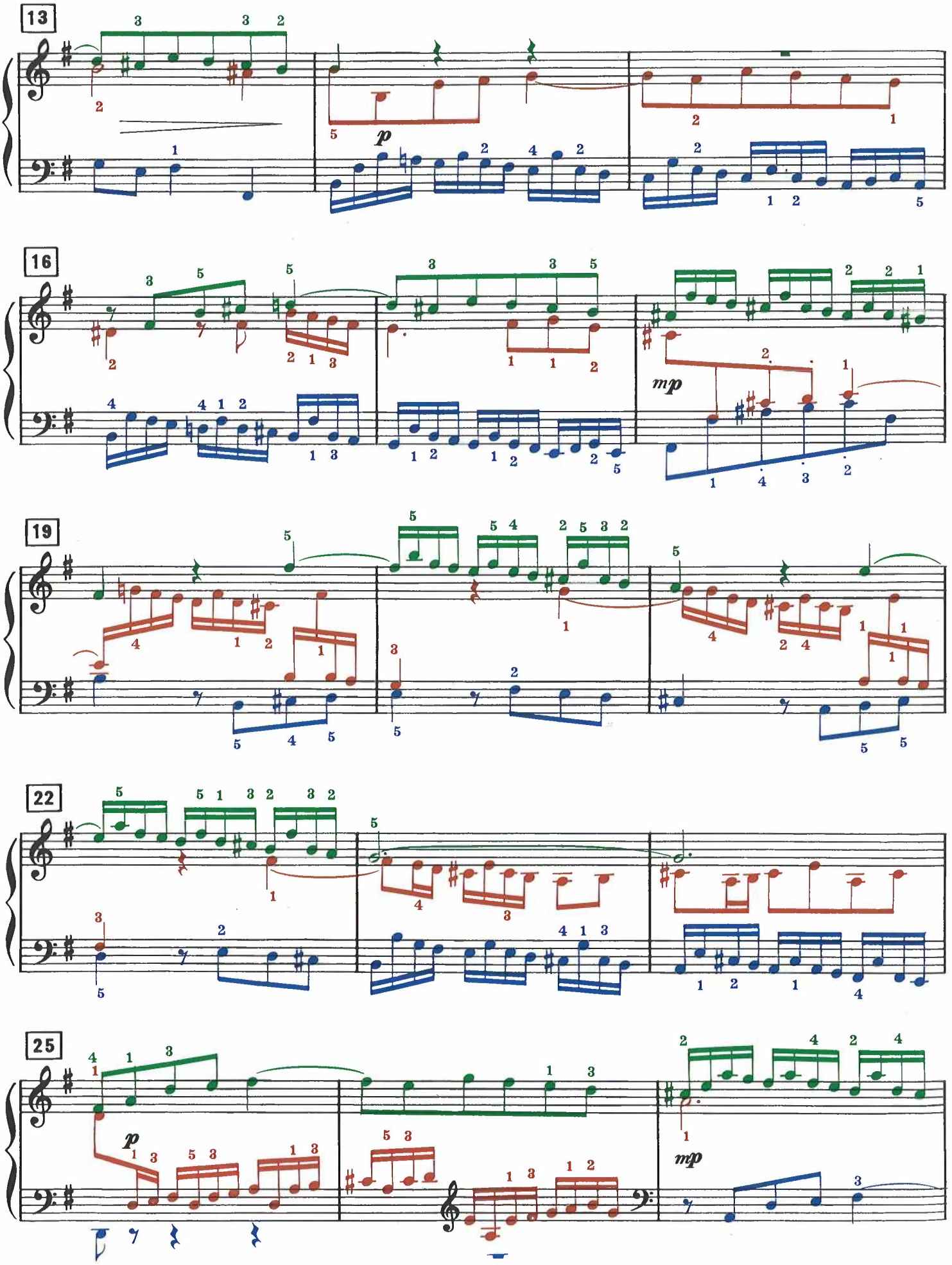
SINFONIA VII

Meditatively, with inward feeling



* To be emphasized in playing. The B, E, and A in the bass serve as a rudimentary beginning of a double fugue—fugue with two themes. For complete double fugue see Fugue in G sharp minor, The Well-tempered Clavier, Book II.

** The eighth notes B, A, and C form the retrograde inversion (that is, backward and upside down) of the F sharp, A, and G of the soprano of the same measure.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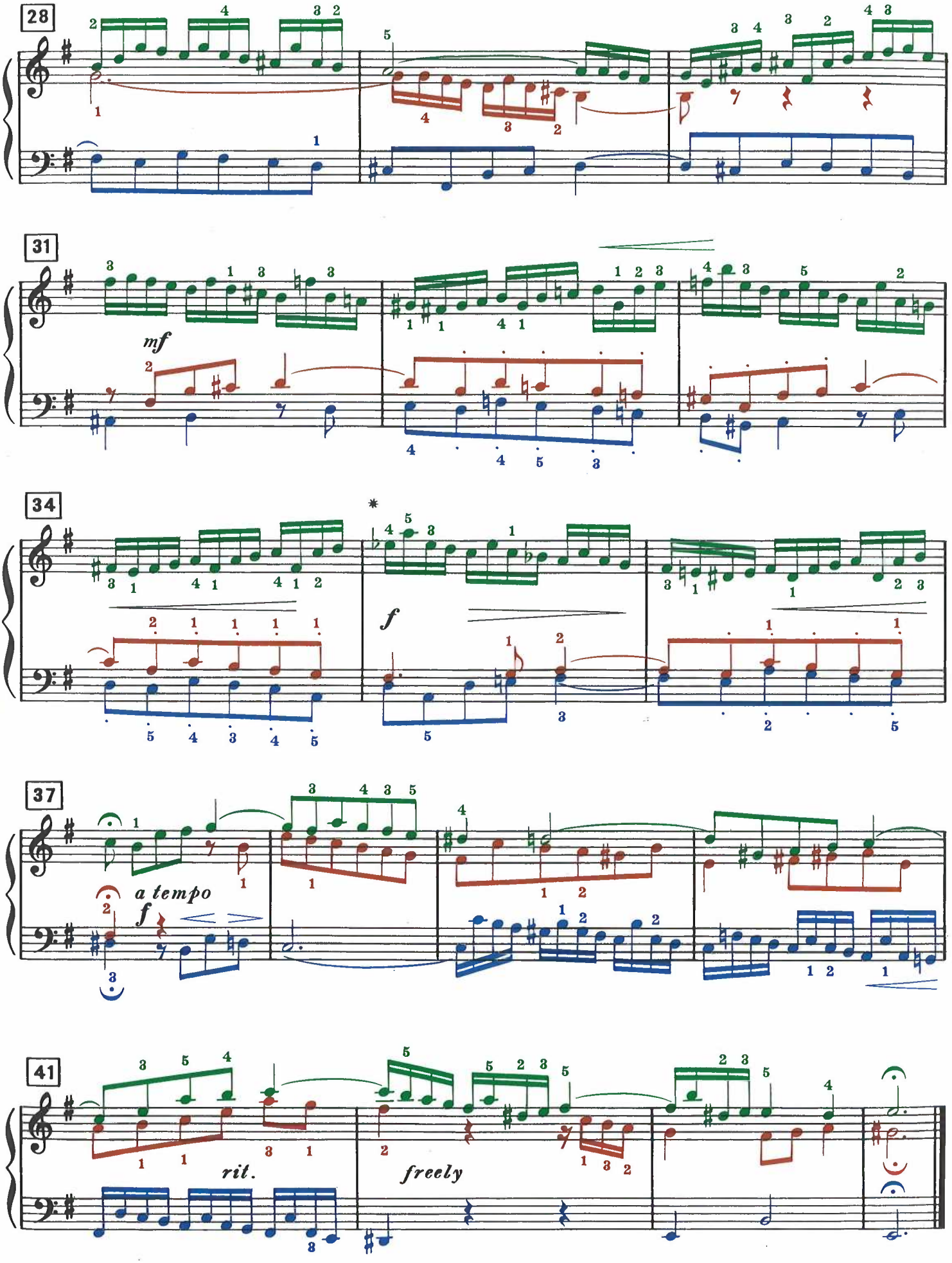
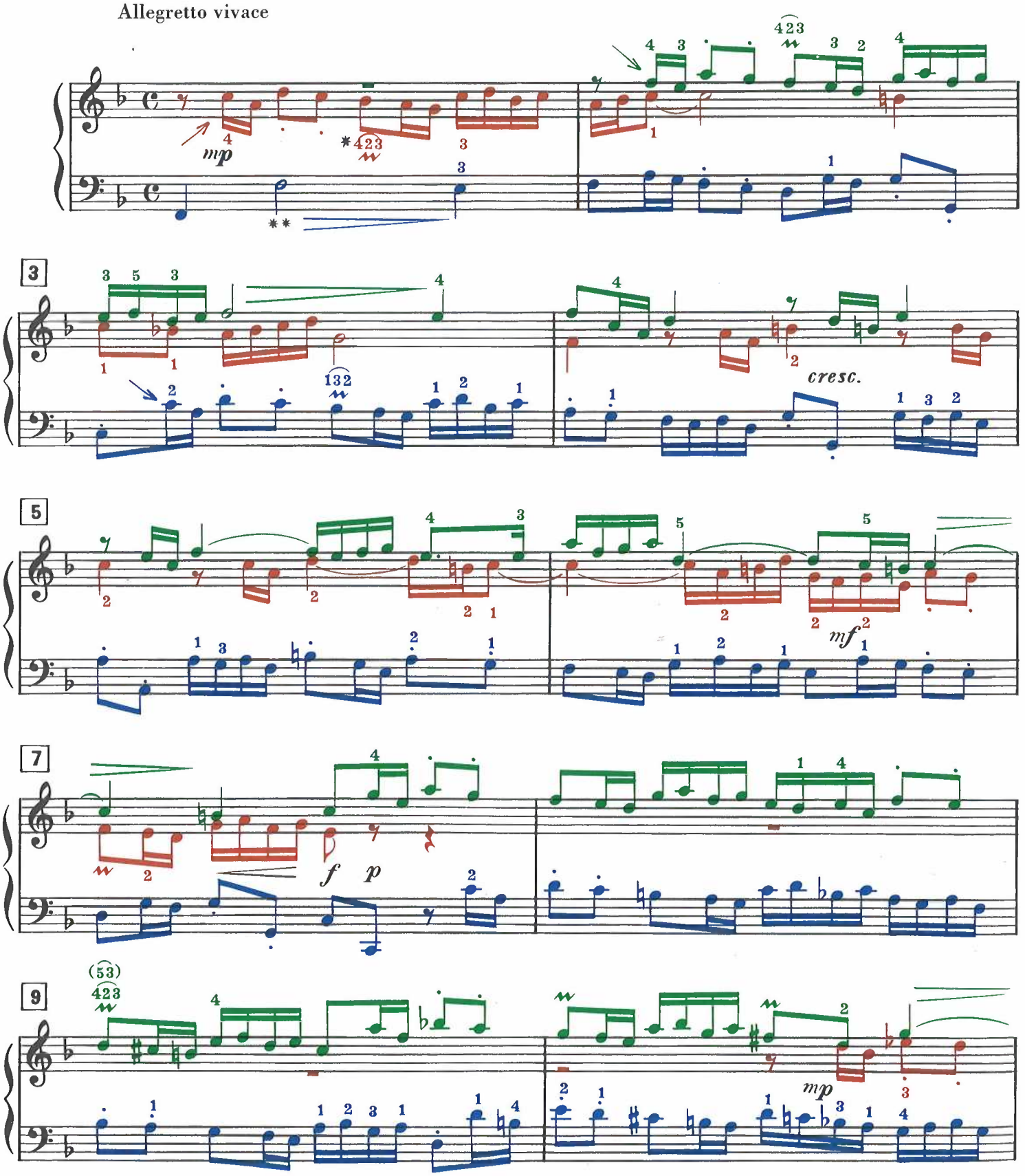
16
19
22
25
p
mp
p
mp



Compare and Contrast: Sarabande in E minor, English Suite 5, for keyboard; Chorus 1, The Saint Matthew Passion.

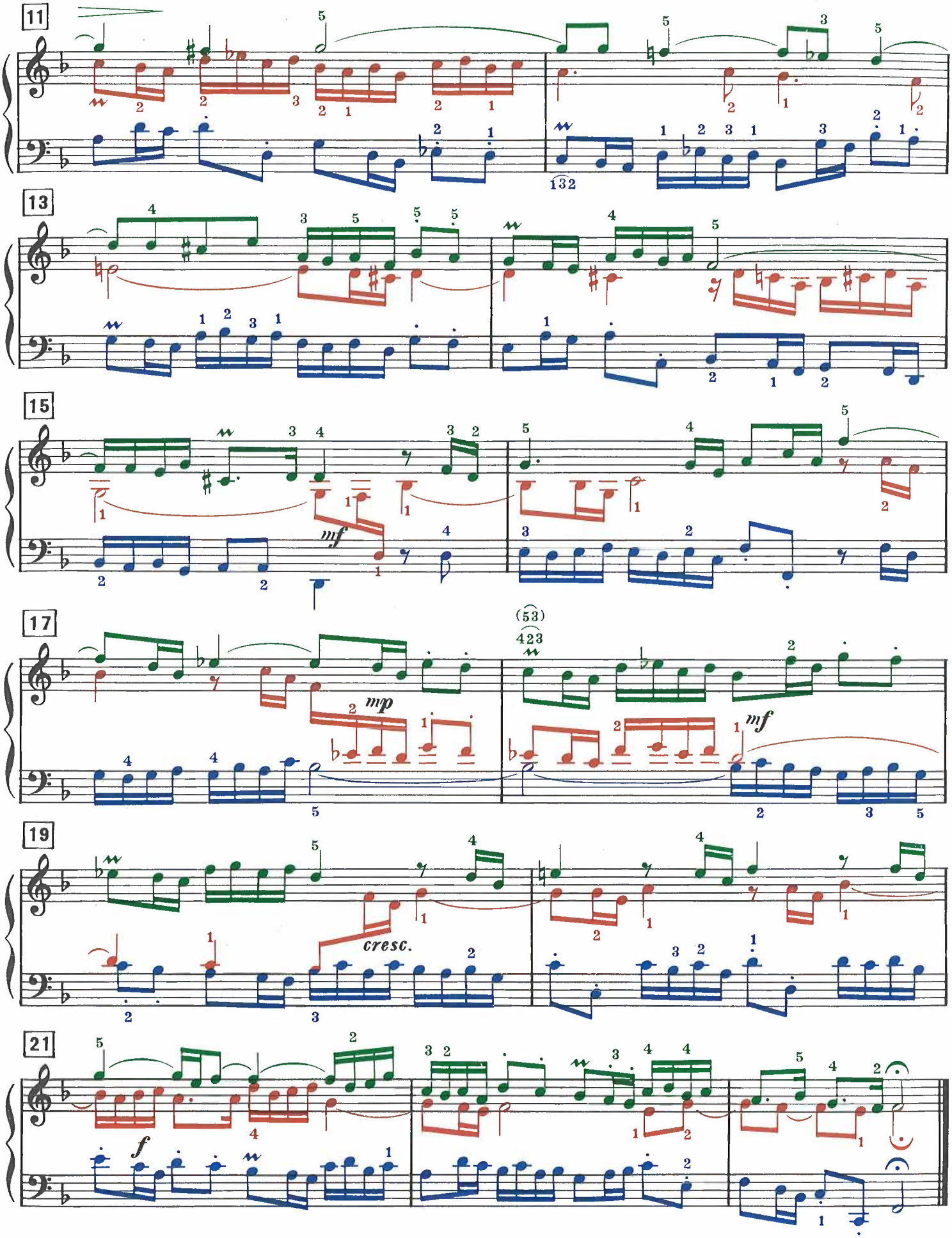
SINFONIA VIII

Allegretto vivace



*The first three ornaments are Bach's; the others are editorial.

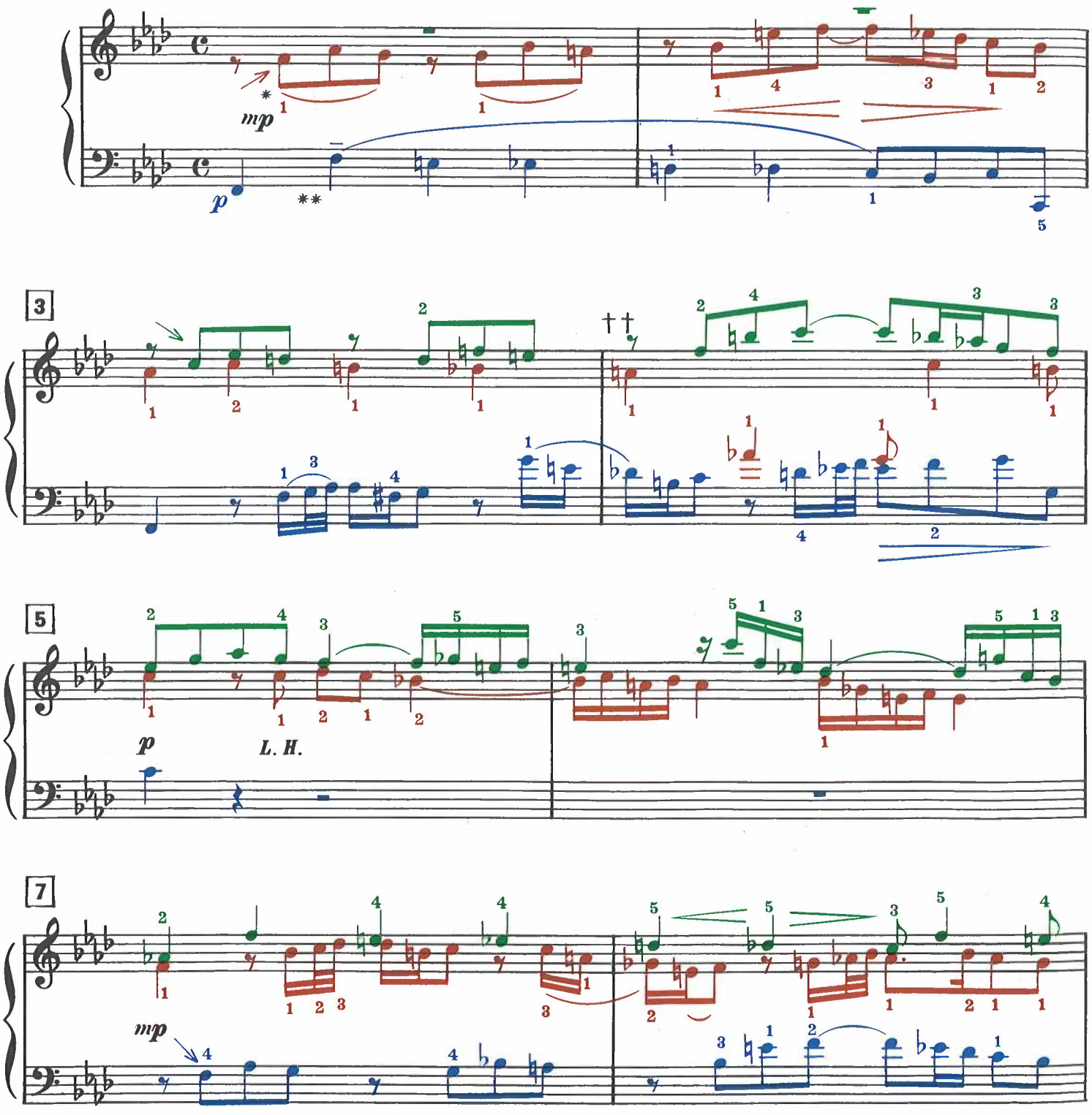
** The syncopation on the second bass note is always slightly accented and resolved to its lower half tone in a diminuendo whenever it recurs.



Compare and Contrast: Duet, *Wie bin ich doch so herzlich froh* (On Jesus all my Love is Cast), Cantata 49; Brandenburg Concerto 2 in F major, for orchestra.

SINFONIA IX

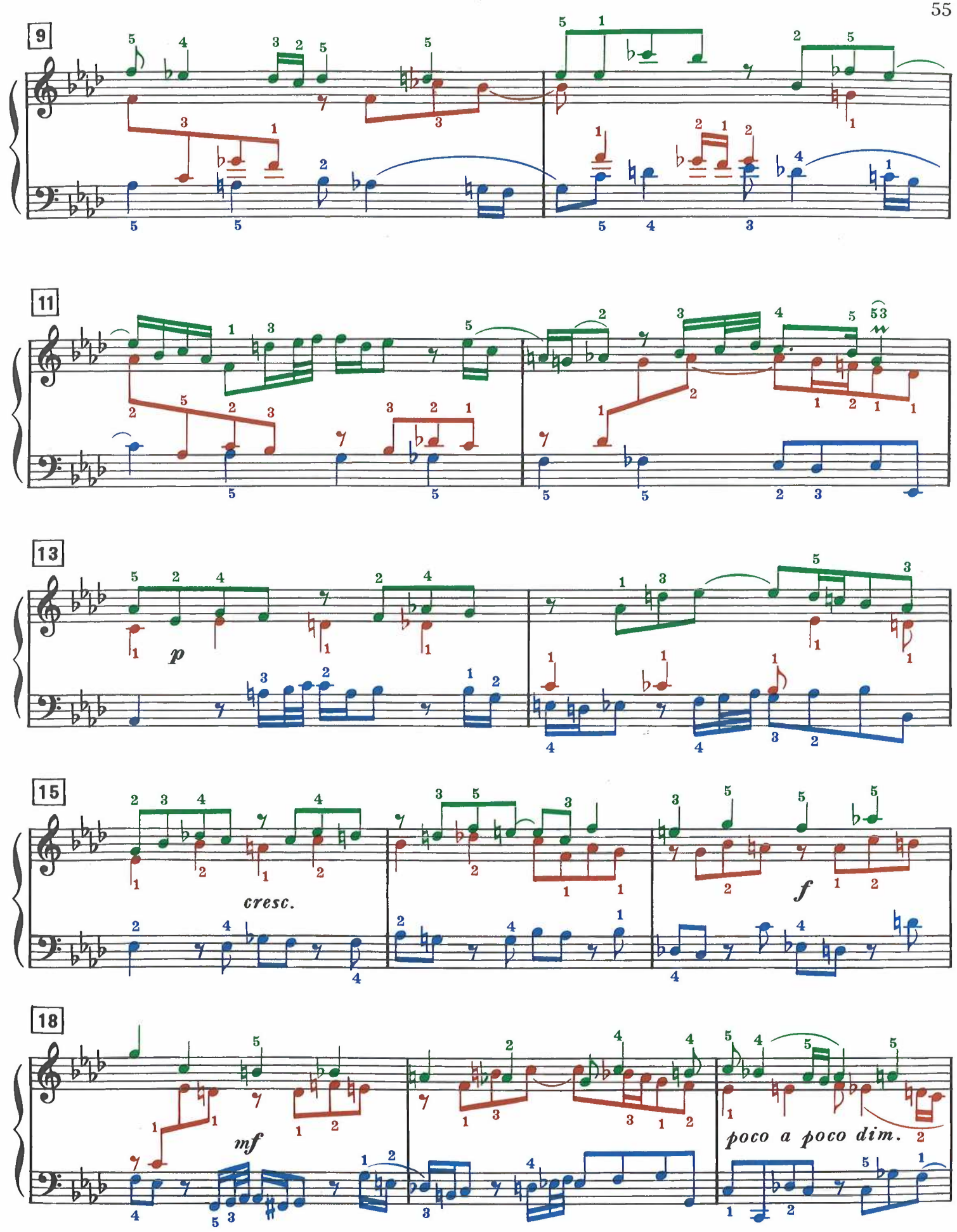
Lento

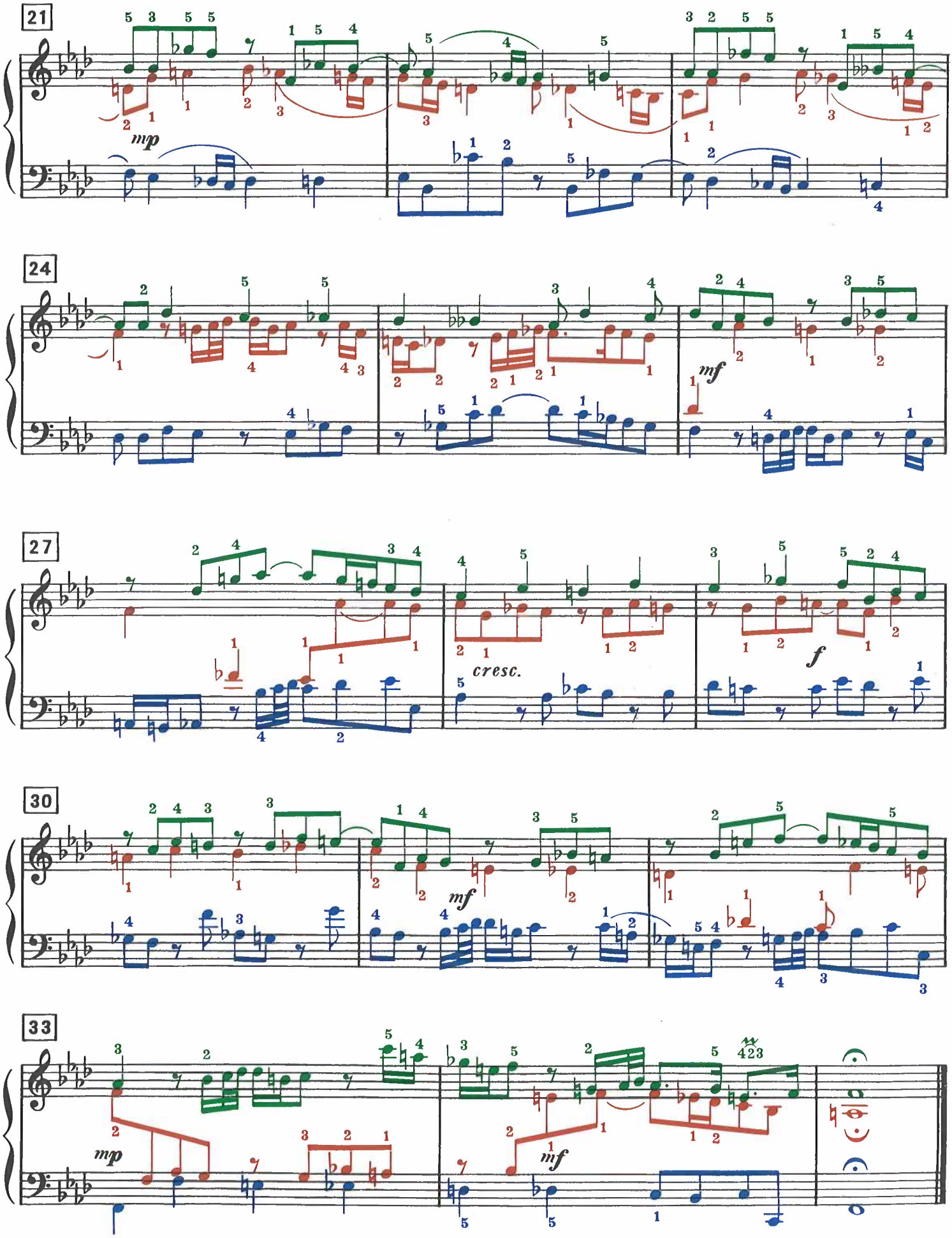


* The first two slurs are Bach's.

** The *chaconne* bass and the augmented fourth at the end of the treble motif should always be distinctly audible.

† The soprano voice should be carefully controlled. A too-loud soprano is detrimental to the overall effect of the composition.


9
11
13
p
15
cresc.
f
18
mf
poco a poco dim.



Compare and Contrast: Chorus 16, *Crucifixus* (And was crucified also under Pontius Pilate, suffered and was buried), The B minor Mass; Chorus 2, *Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Sagen* (Crying, Lamenting, Worrying, Talking), Cantata 12; Lament, The Capriccio on the Departed Brother, for keyboard; Prelude in F minor, The Well-tempered Clavier, Book II.

Explanatory Comments on Sinfonia IX

The most complex and dramatic of all, Sinfonia IX may be difficult to appreciate at first hearing because it contains so many chromatic notes—notes that do not occur in the key signature.

Sinfonia IX is in triple counterpoint. There are three different themes, all having equal prominence. The first two themes are frequently found in the particular contexts of Baroque Cantatas stated below. They are as follows:

1. Modified Sobbing Motif, an extended version of the descending two-note chromatic motif.

2. Sorrow Motif.

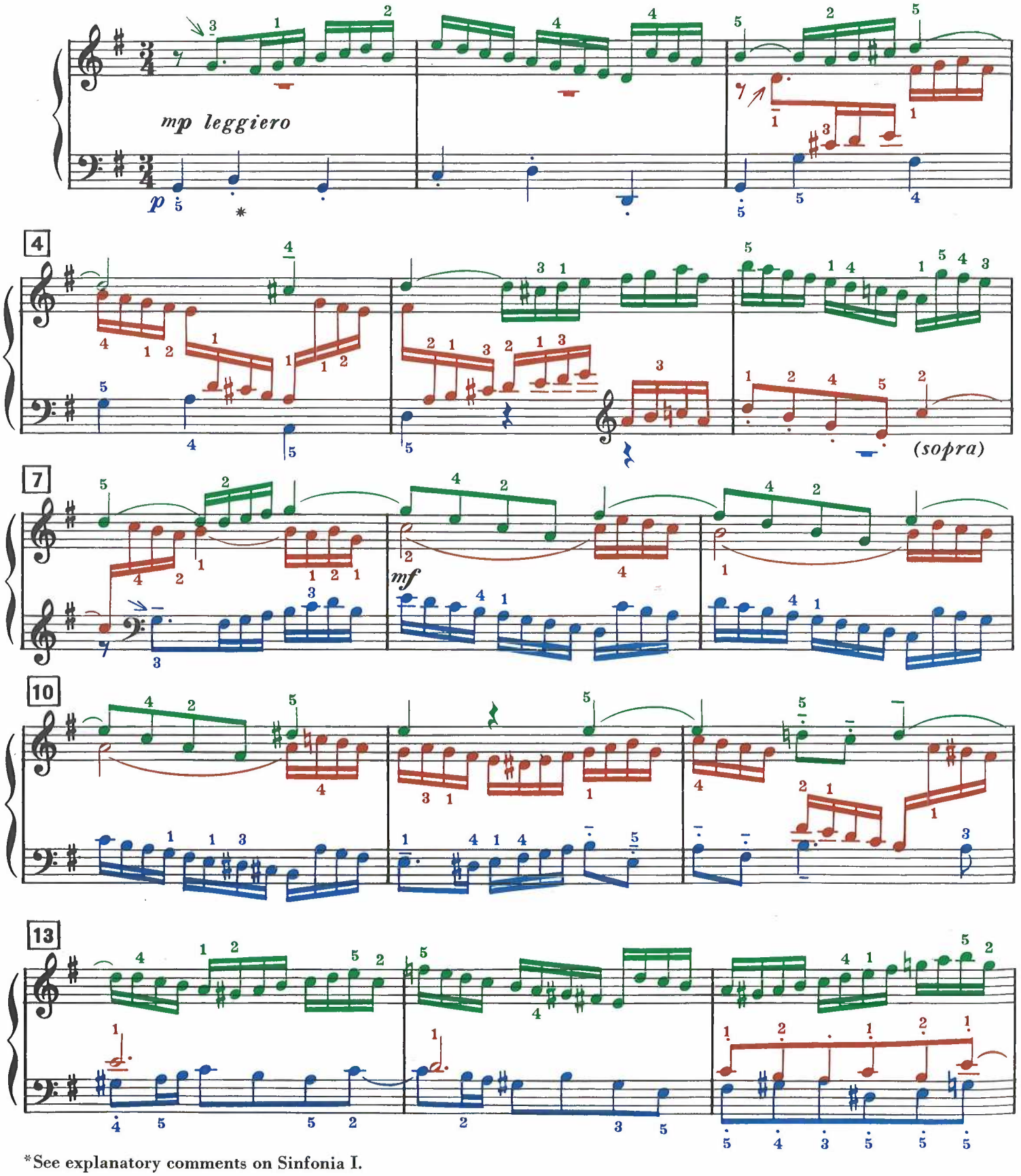
3. "Passion," or a more intense theme than the two previous ones.

On the piano it is especially important to tone down the soprano which if played too forcefully will cause an imbalance.

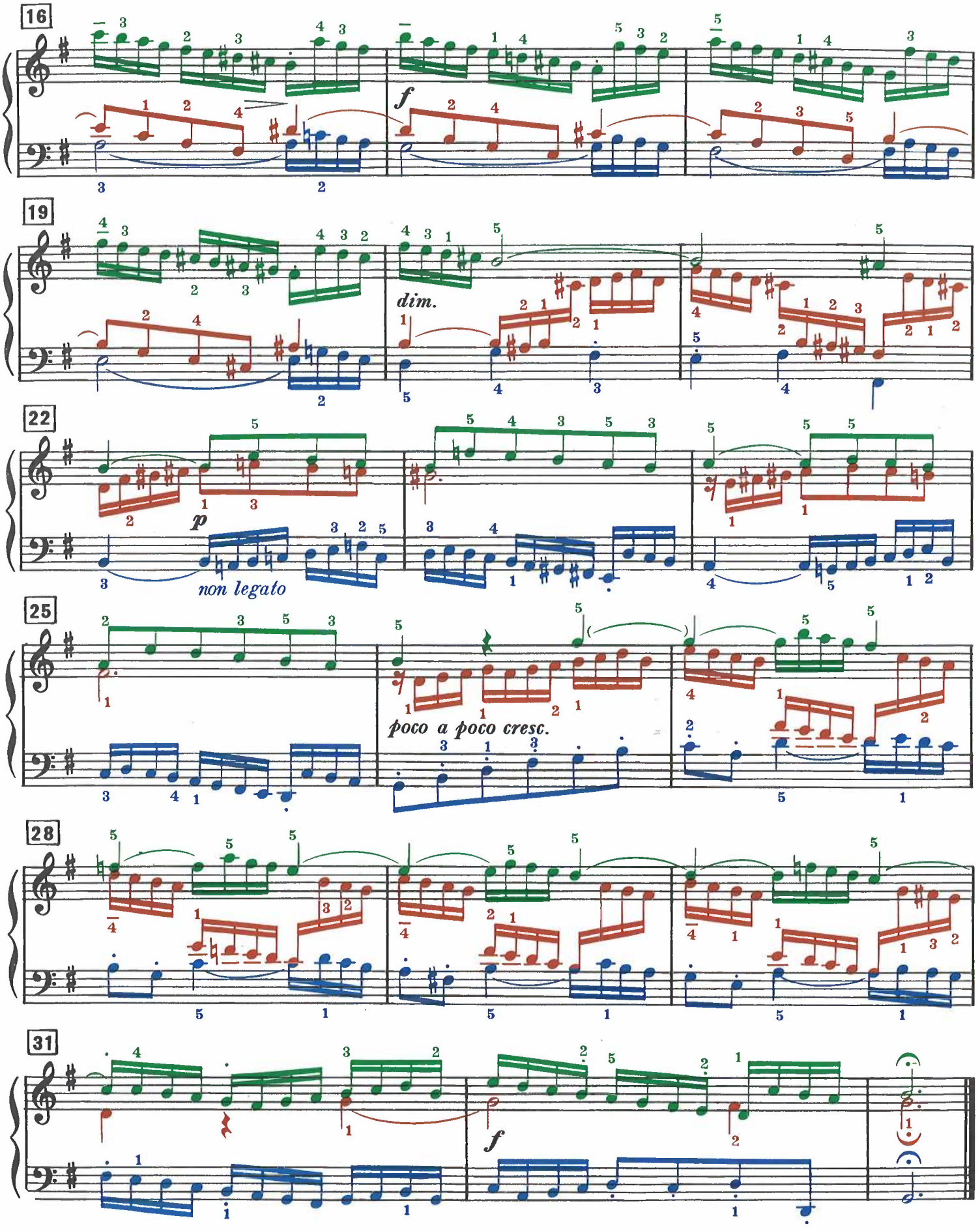
The twentieth-century composer Arnold Schoenberg, responsible for the "freeing of the dissonance" calls J. S. Bach the first twelve-tone composer. Measures 15-18 and 28-30 with their absence of a key center are indeed reminiscent of the music of the twentieth-century twelve-tone composers.

SINFONIA X*

Rapid and dance-like



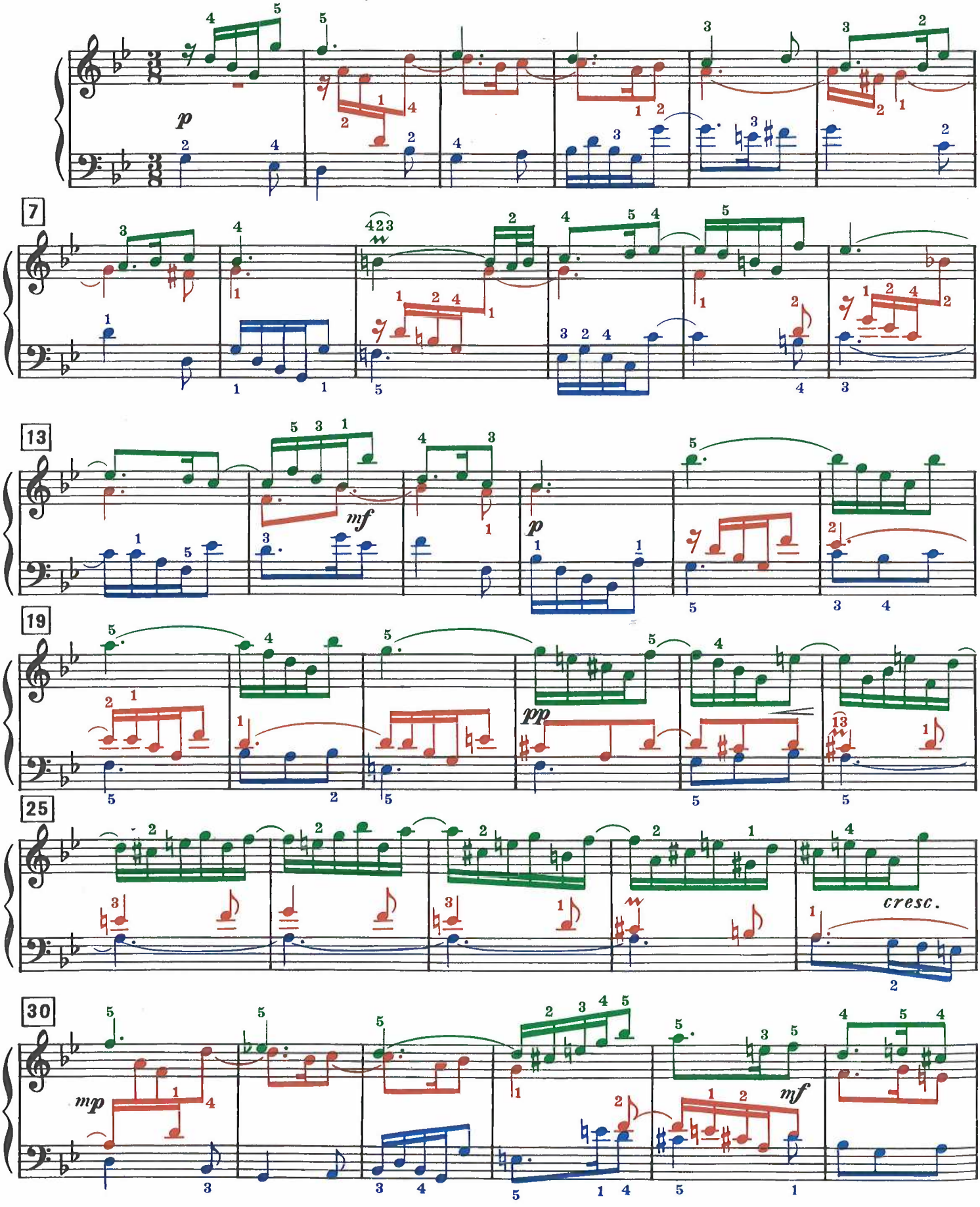
*See explanatory comments on Sinfonia I.

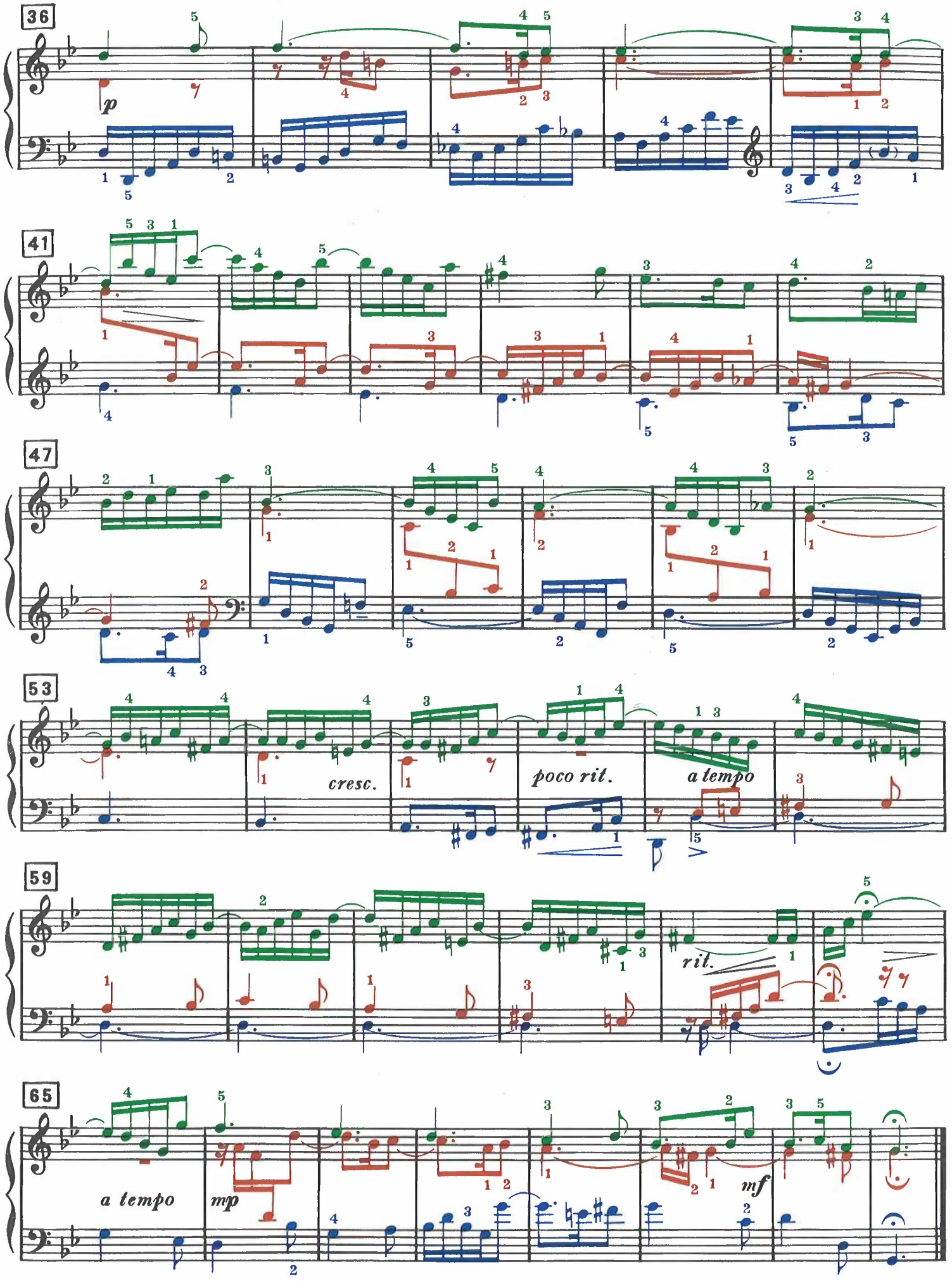


Compare and Contrast: Second movement, Sonata in G major, for clavier and viola da gamba.

SINFONIA XI

Andantino, quasi siciliano





Compare and Contrast: Second movement, Concerto in D minor, for two violins and orchestra.

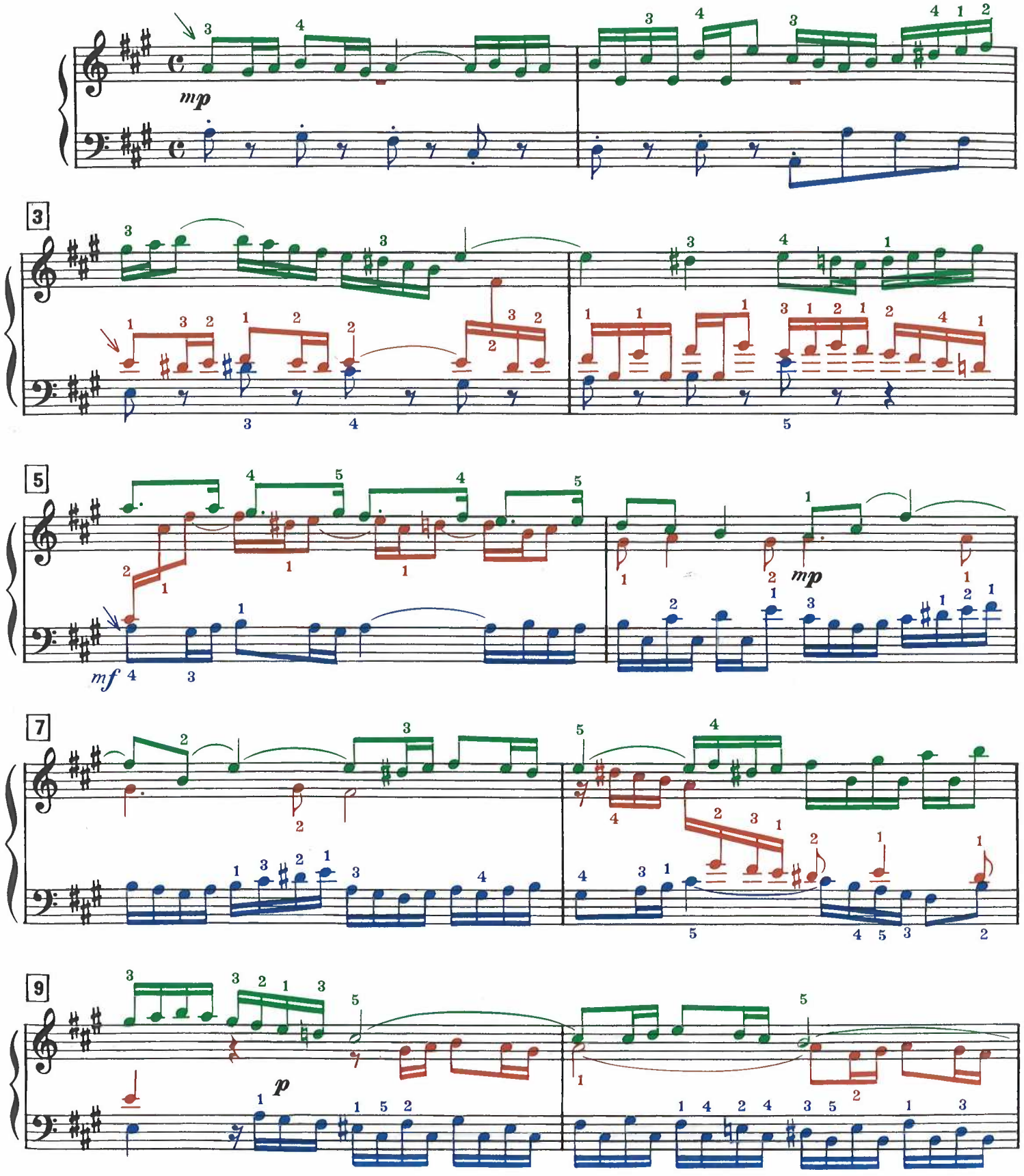
Explanatory Comments on Sinfonia XI

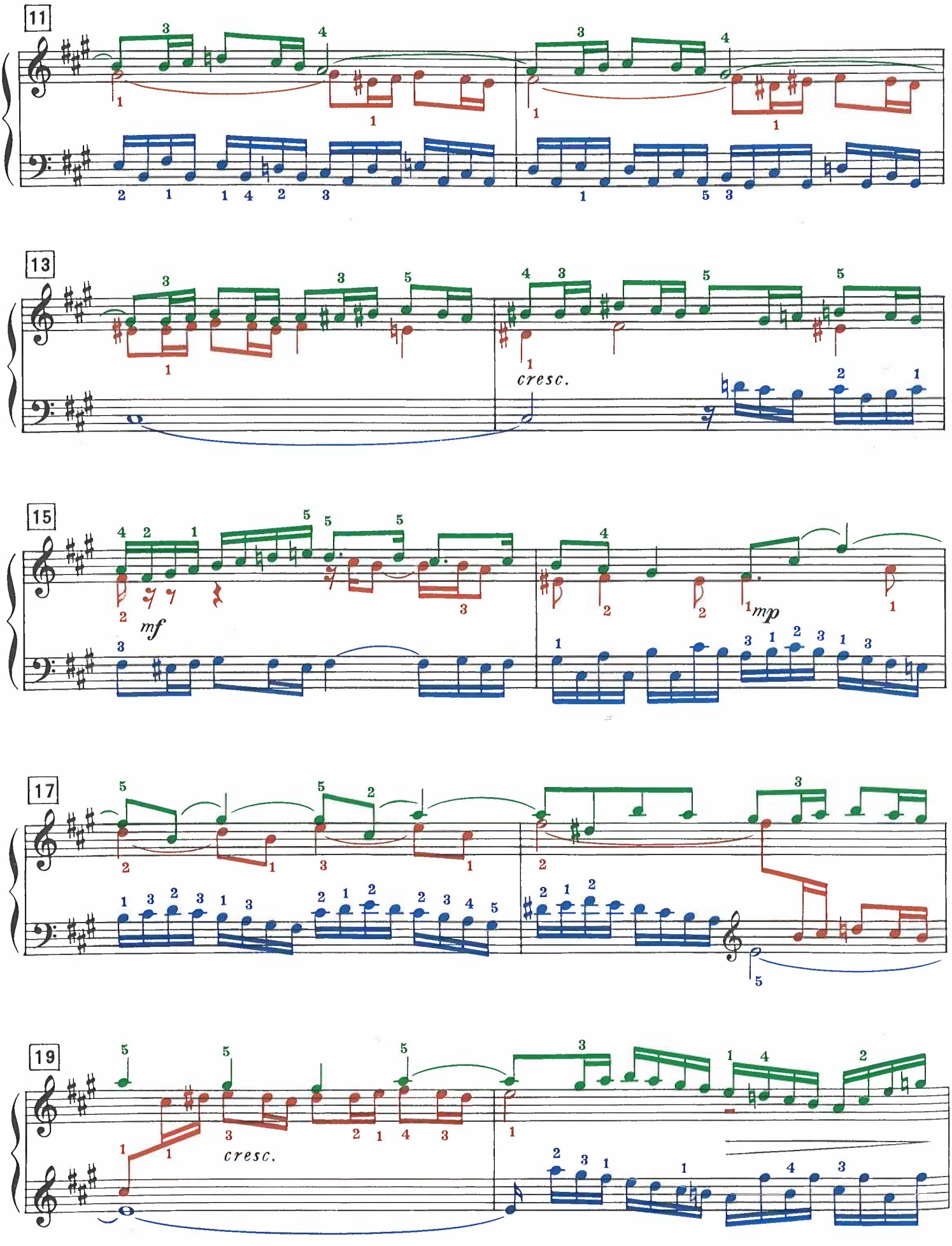
Sinfonia XI is an example of Bach's adaptation for the clavier of music written for the lute, a stringed instrument hundreds of years old with a tear-shaped body. Broken chords such as those found throughout Sinfonia XI were the mainstay of lute music, and the trills in the bass clef of measures 24 and 28 are an imitation of a lute technique in which ornaments were played by the left hand while the right hand plucked one string at a time. Compositions imitating the techniques of the lute were written for the clavier before the time of Bach by Italian Renaissance composers such as Andrea Gabrieli (ca. 1520-1586).

Sinfonia XI is also a stylized version of the *siciliano*—many sicilianos were written for the lute—an aristocratic dance of the Baroque of moderate tempo, usually in 6/8 or 12/8 meter with an expressive melody, dotted rhythms, and an accompaniment of flowing, broken chords. As such, Sinfonia XI should be performed rhythmically and gracefully, but seriously.

SINFONIA XII

Allegretto




11
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cresc.
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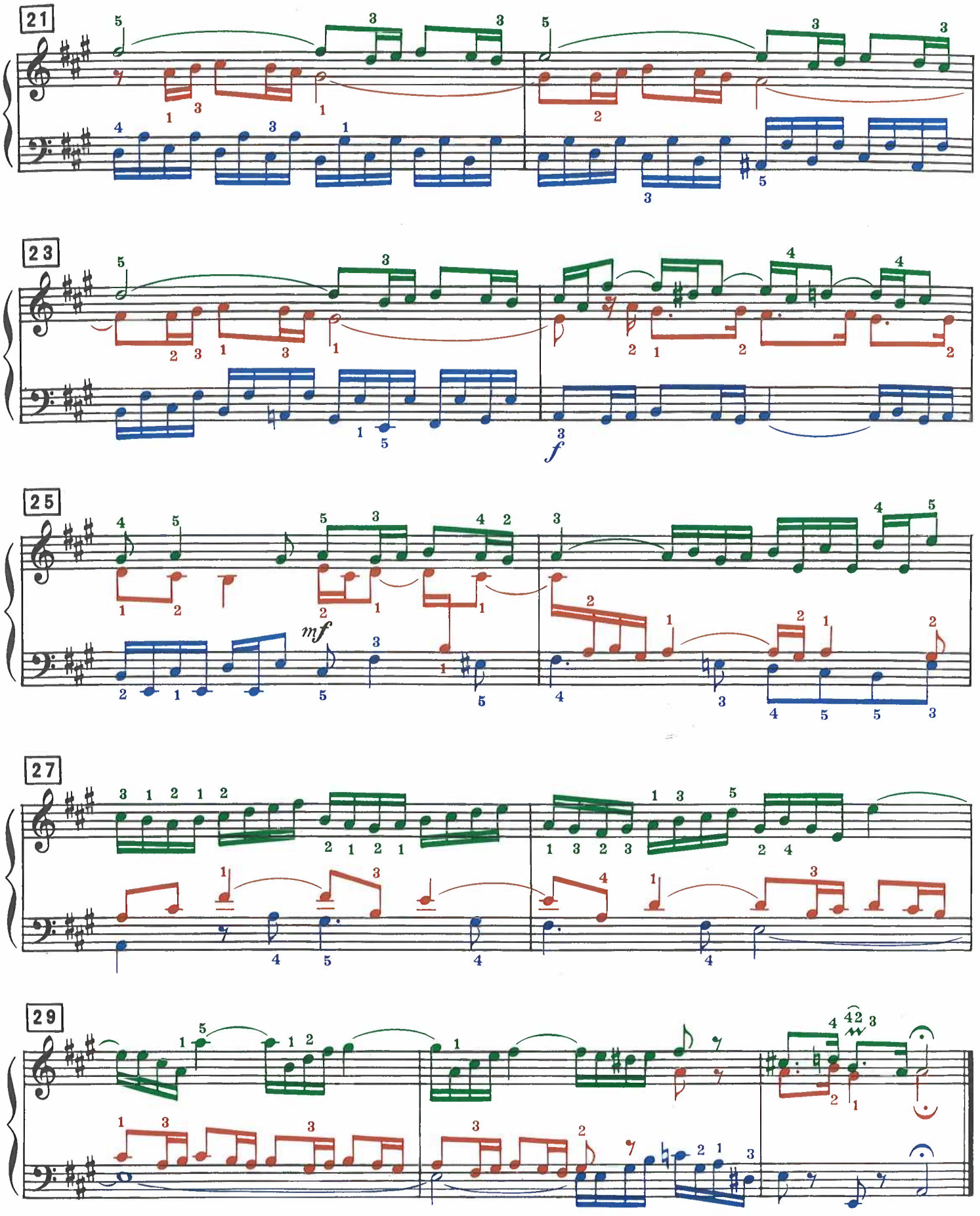
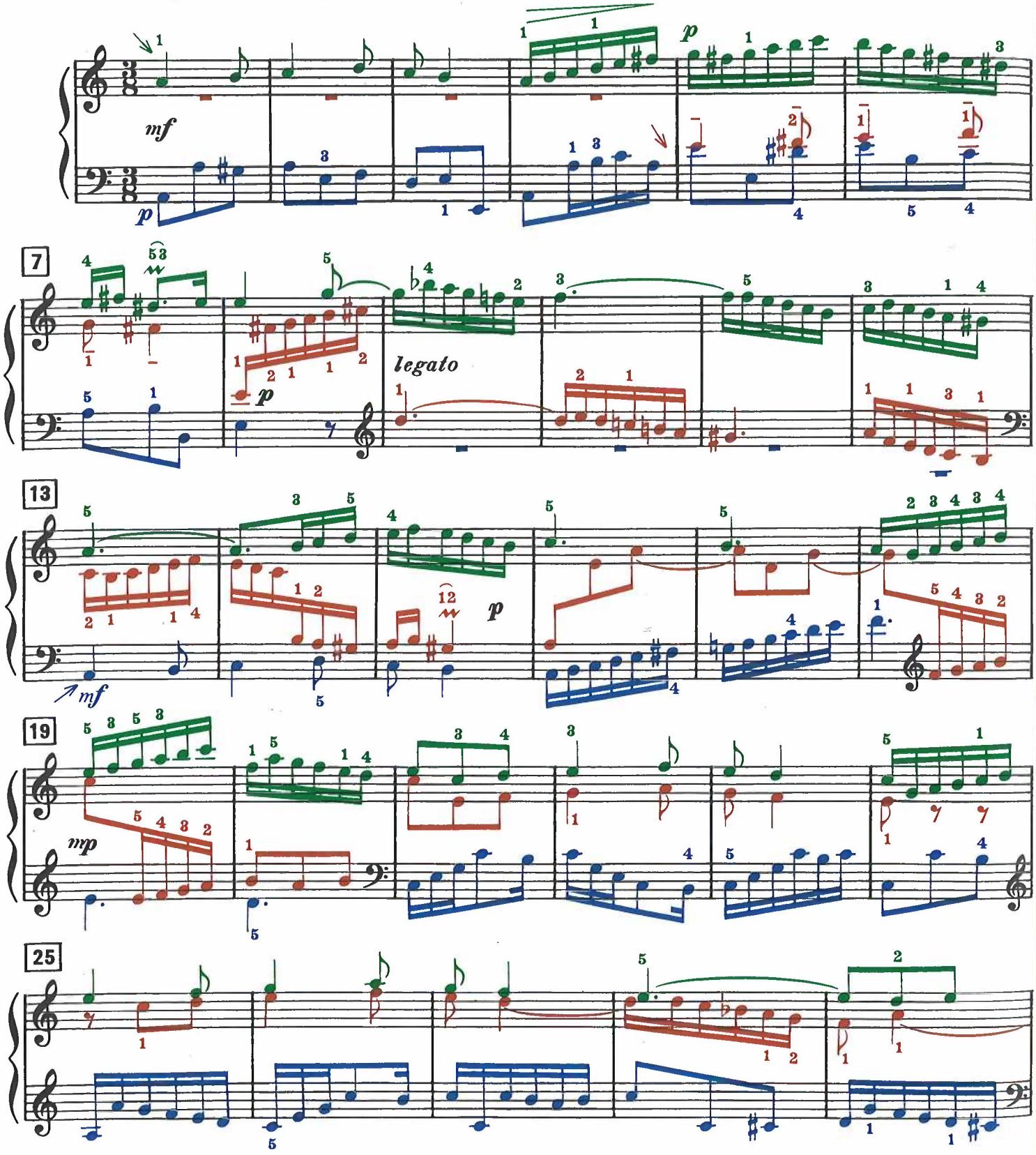


Compare and Contrast: Soprano Aria 5, *Laudamus te* (We Praise Thee), The B minor Mass; Fugue 1, Toccata in F sharp minor, for keyboard.

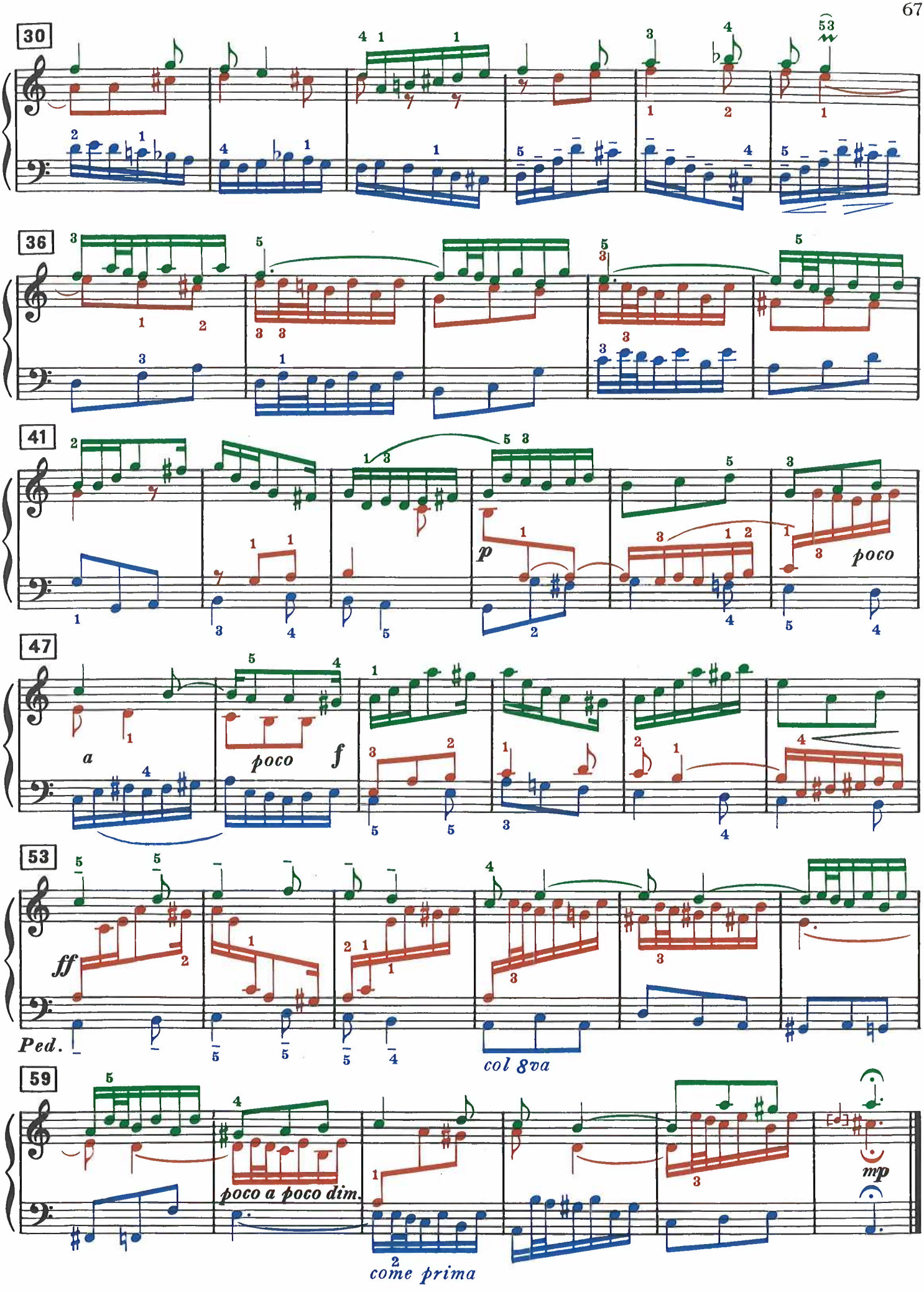
SINFONIA XIII

Slowly and majestically



* Theme in major key.

** Counter-theme.



Compare and Contrast: *Burlesca,* Partita in A minor, for keyboard.

Explanatory Comments on Sinfonia XIII

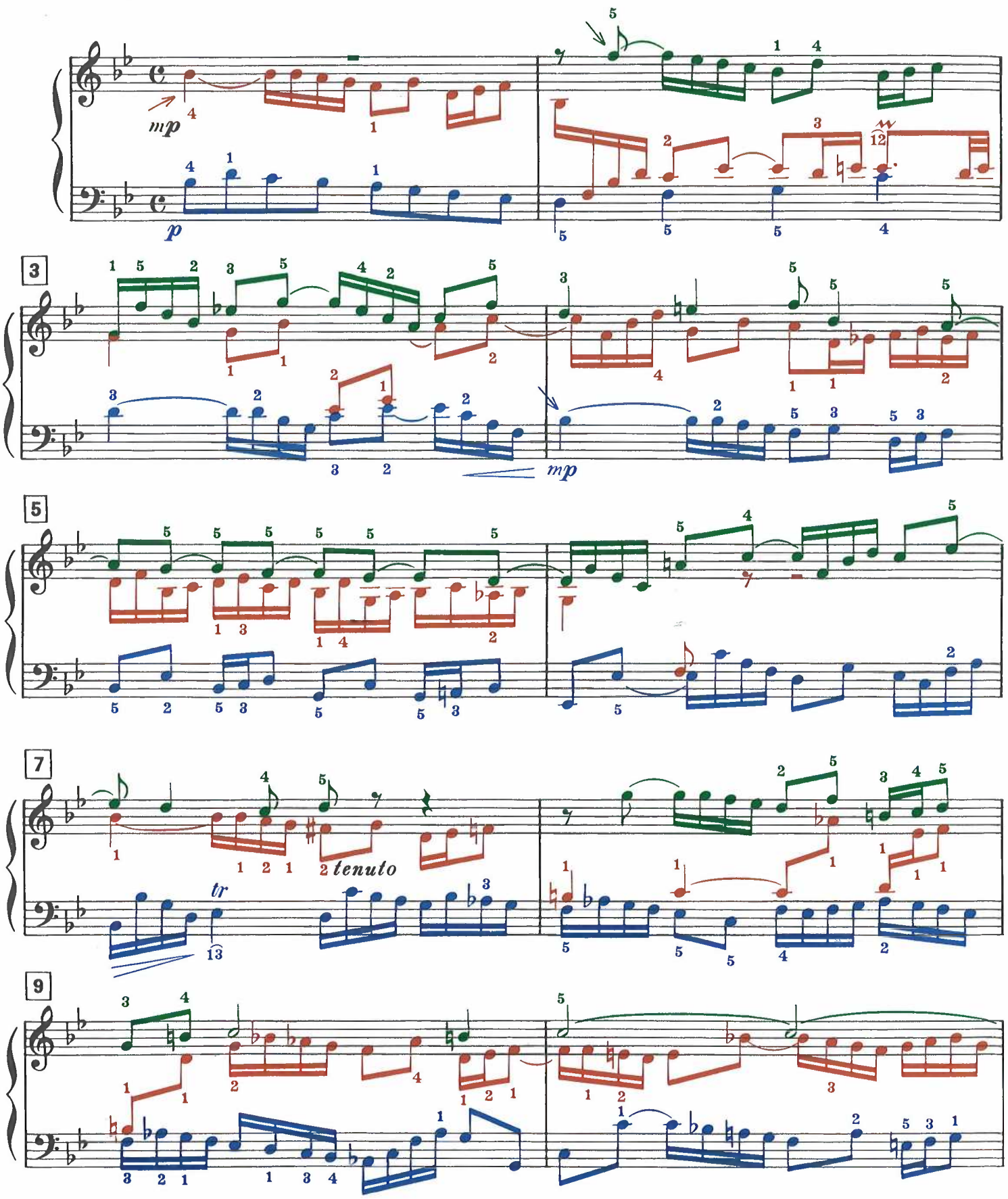
Two distinctive features set Sinfonia XIII apart from the others: one is the counter-theme—a completely new second theme which occurs for the first time in the lowest voice of measures 21-24—and the other, the fact that, more than the other Sinfonias, it is written in the idiomatic language of the harpsichord rather than the clavichord.

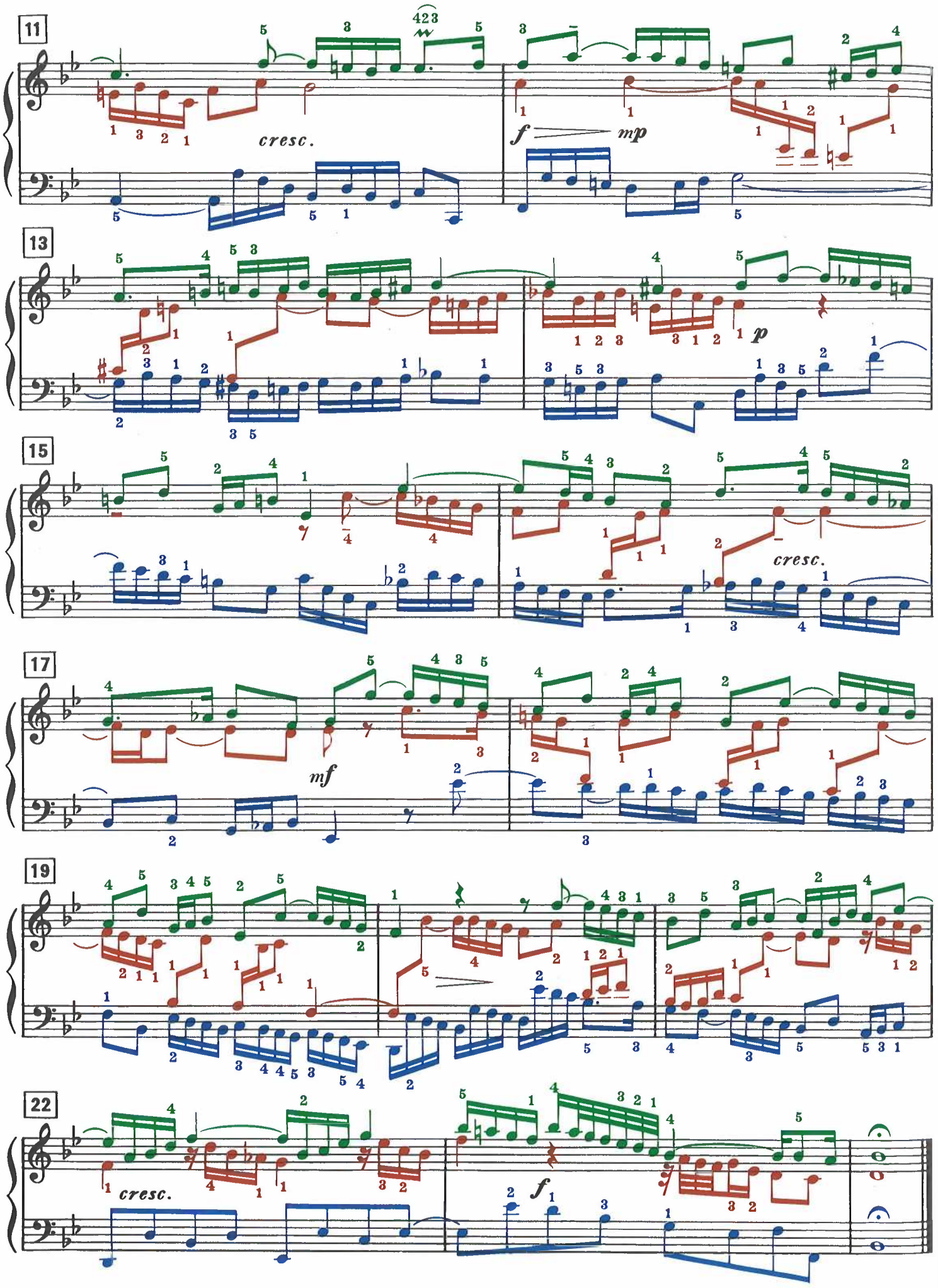
Although the opening A minor theme is relatively unrhythmic when compared to those of the other Sinfonias and consists merely of a motive of six stepwise tones followed by a scale, the artistry of Sinfonia XIII lies in the juxtaposition of short melodic patterns and harmonic changes—theme, counter-theme, scale passages, and the toccata-like patterns of measure 37. The harpsichord with its various stops producing changes in tone color and sound quality is the appropriate instrument for expressing contrasts in Baroque keyboard music composed in the separate, blocked-out patterns of the kind found in Sinfonia XIII rather than the overlapping series of phrases of the majority of the other Sinfonias.

In piano performance the various figurations should be conceived as belonging to a series of terraces or sound levels, each of which should be dynamically separated from those adjacent to it. Wanda Landowska's recording of Sinfonia XIII, RCA Victor, LM-2389 dynamically portrays in sound the terraced effect.

SINFONIA XIV

Andante

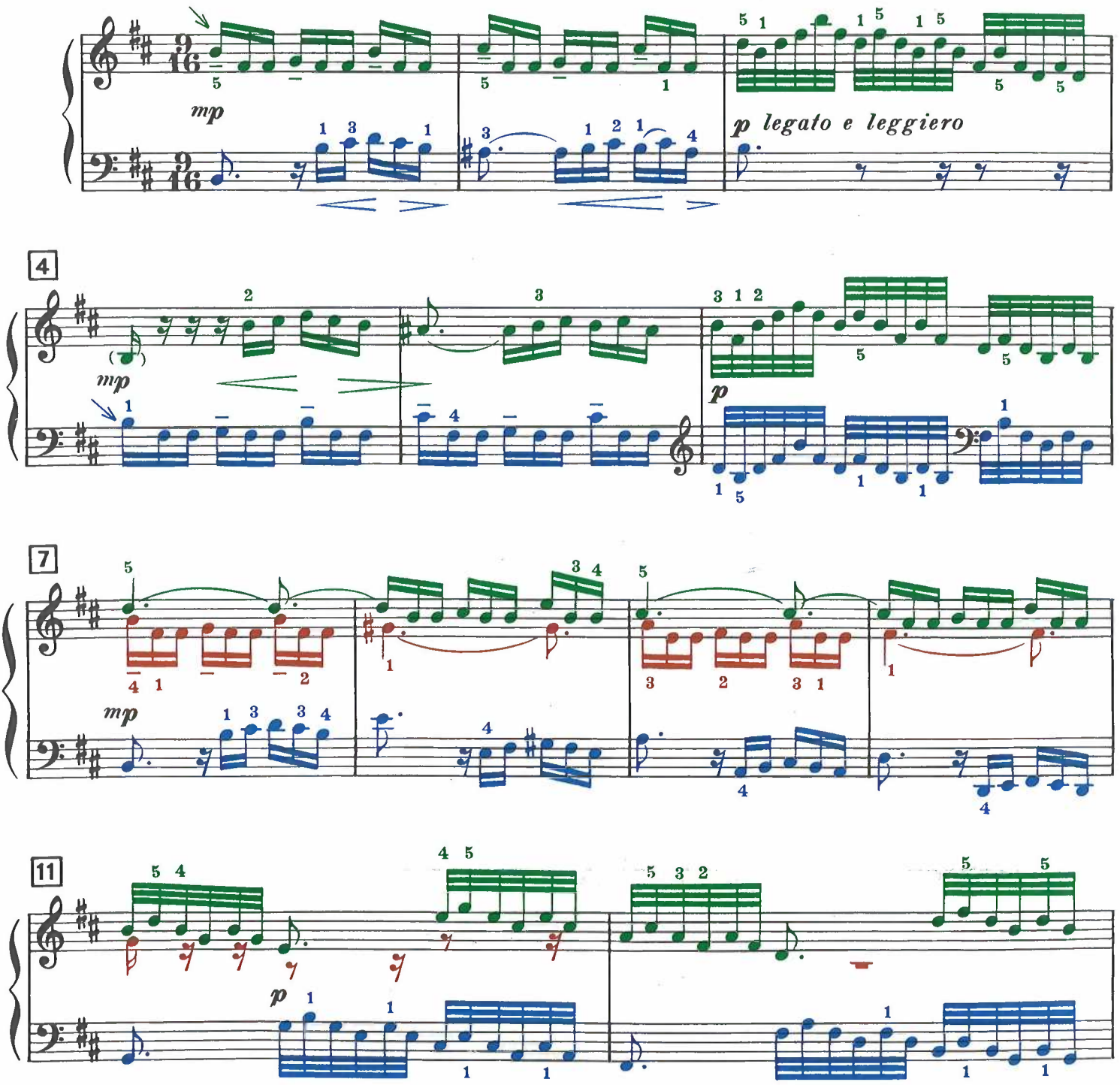




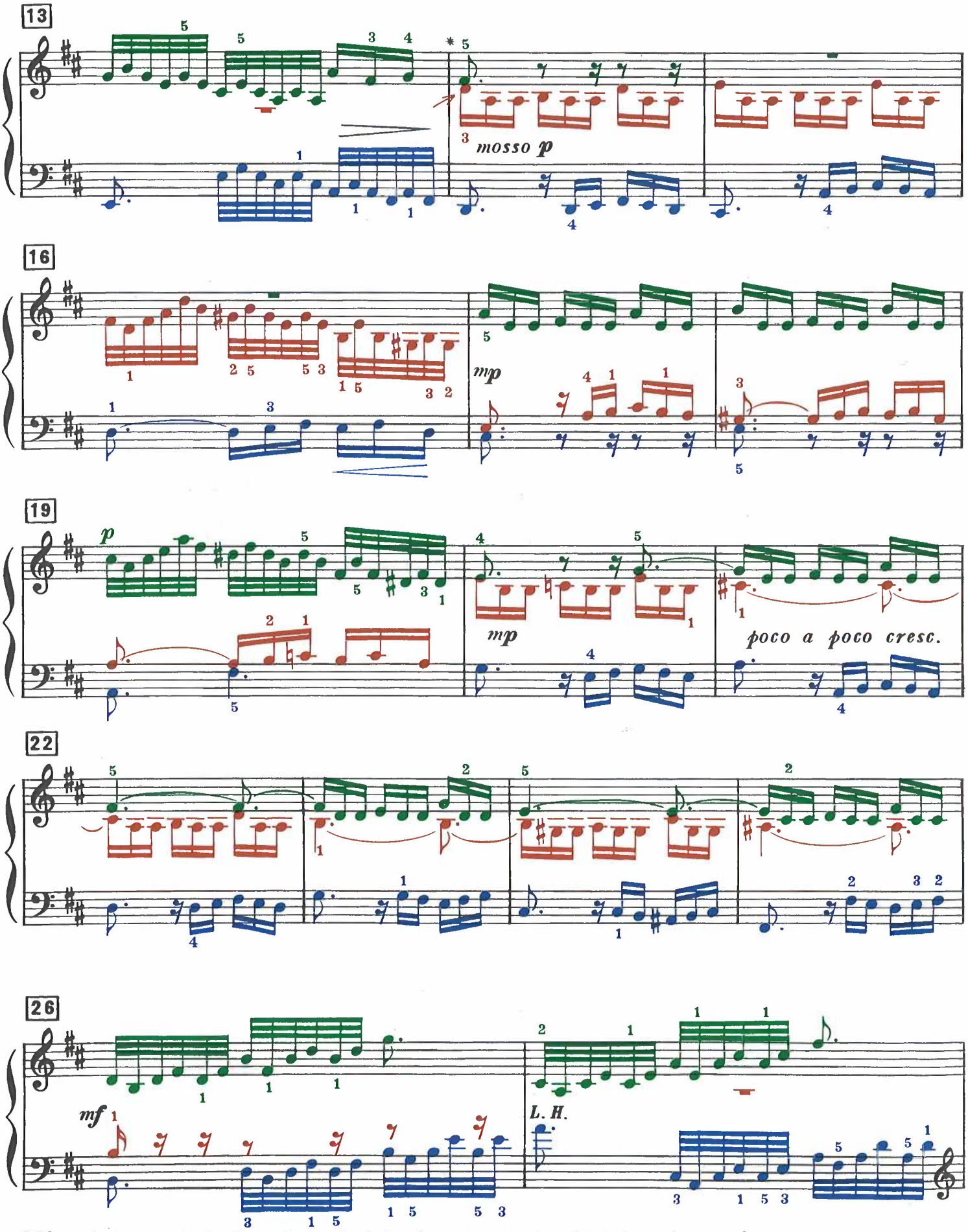
Compare and Contrast: Prelude and Allemande, Partita in B flat major, for keyboard.

SINFONIA XV*

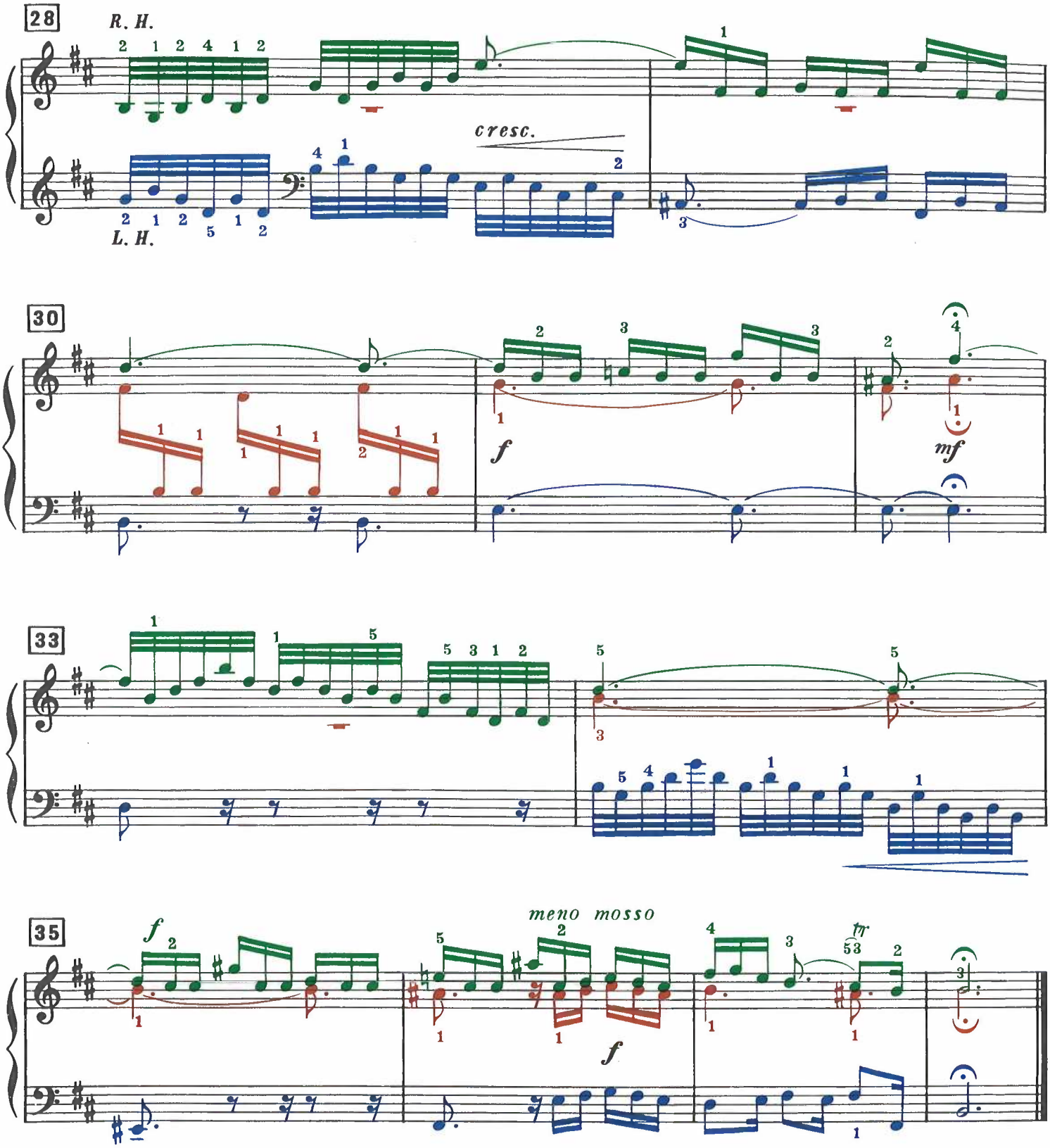
Moderato



* Many performers like to play Sinfonia XV at high speed, but it is not necessary to do so. The Sinfonias were not written for the purpose of displaying a virtuoso technique (see Preface). The intensity, dynamic range, should be related to the speed at which the composition is played. If played at a moderate tempo, a rather heavy touch may be used, and if played rapidly, a lighter touch.



* The only instance in the Sinfonias in which the thematic entry is a third above the second entry.



Compare and Contrast: Alto Aria 9, *Qui sedes ad dextram patris,* etc. (Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father), The B minor Mass; Fugue in B minor, The Well-tempered Clavier, Book I; Fugue in B minor, The Well-tempered Clavier, Book II.

Glossary of Terms

Absolute music—Music which is dissociated from extra-musical ideas.

Acciaccatura (It. crushing)—An ornament in which the lower second note is played very quickly before or simultaneously with the regular note.

Affekt (Ger.)—Passion, emotion, or mood. Often associated with Baroque music, judging from the eighteenth-century theory books.

Alberti bass—An accompaniment device consisting of the division of a chord into a simple pattern of repeated notes.

Baroque—Possibly from the Portuguese *barrocco*, an irregularly-shaped pearl. Musically, the era between 1600–1750 characterized by the continuo bass, the development of instrumental and vocal forms (concerto, cantata, opera, oratorio, variation), and the establishing of the tonic and dominant as the main harmonic chords.

Binary—A two-part musical structure

Cadence (Lat.)—A fall, corresponding to the drop of the voice at the end of a sentence. A musical formula completing a phrase, section, or composition, conveying the impression of a conclusion.

Cantabile—A singable or singing touch in which melody is smoothly presented. Cantabile, as stated in Bach's introduction to the Inventions and Sinfonias is based on legato playing.

Canzona—A predecessor of the fugue which grew out of the French chanson; a light, rhythmic song having simple counterpoint.

Chaconne bass—(See Sinfonia IX) A repeated bass, usually in descending half-steps, found in Laments and other sad music.

Clavichord—A small keyboard instrument of four octaves having strings which vibrate when touched by a metal tangent. One of the oldest known keyboard instruments, the clavichord is capable of producing a singing touch and subtle dynamic variations, but is low in volume.

Clavier (Ger.)—A general term designating harpsichord and clavichord in the Baroque Era, but also includes today the piano and other keyboard instruments.

Coda—A concluding section of a composition.

Continuo bass—See figured bass.

Counterpoint, Contrapuntal—Music containing two or more simultaneous melody lines which are independent of each other.

Dominant chord—Triad built on the fifth tone of a scale.

Dynamics—Signs indicating degrees of sound-intensity.

Episode—A digression from the main theme of a contrapuntal composition.

Fantasia—Various types of instrumental compositions. **a.** Improvisatory compositions in free rhythm (Luis de Milan, *Libro de Musica*, 1535, pieces for lute). **b.** Seventeenth-century contrapuntal works for keyboard in which a slow, sustained theme is developed and rhythmically augmented and diminished. (Jan Sweelinck 1562–1621). **c.** A *ricercare* or non-sectional development of a theme of slow, sustained character (Girolamo Frescobaldi 1583–1643). **d.** Contrapuntal composition for three viols, Matthew Locke (ca. 1630–1677), Henry Purcell (ca. 1659–1695). **e.** J. S. Bach's original name for the Sinfonias. See also Bach's Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue; Fantasia in C minor; Third movement, Partita in A minor, all for keyboard.

Figuration, Figure—Use of relatively short, individual motives or melodic patterns which are simple in character.

Figured bass—Also known as continuo bass or basso continuo, thorough-bass or *generalbass*. A bass with numerals which indicate the intervals to be played above the bass note itself.

Fughetta—A short fugue; a fugue-like section of a composition.

Fugue—A contrapuntal composition based on the imitative development of a single theme. The most mature form of imitative counterpoint developed to perfection by J. S. Bach.

Generalbass—See figured bass.

Harpsichord—A 16th- to 18th-century keyboard instrument in which the strings are plucked by a plectrum. Many have two manuals (keyboards) and possess various stops or registers which effect a dynamic change from *pp* to *p* and *F*. Unlike the clavichord and piano, the harpsichord does not produce gradations in sound by a stronger or lighter touch.

Glossary of Terms, *continued*

Inventio, Invention (It. idea)—A musical composition which is unclassifiable as to type, because it is based exclusively upon the development of a melodic idea.

Leggiero—light.

Obbligato—Instrumental parts that are essential, must not be omitted.

Ornament—A melodic embellishment usually considered essential in Baroque music.

Ostinato bass—A single tone or melodic pattern in the bass which is persistently repeated throughout a composition or section of a composition.

Pastoral, Pastorale—A composition imitating the music of shepherds with their pipes and shawms characterized by 6/8 or 12/8 meter; a graceful, flowing melody accompanied by sustained tones. Sinfonia VI is a stylized pastorale.

Praeambulum, Praeludium, Prelude—A musical introduction to a composition or drama. In the Baroque, an improvisatory solo composition for keyboard of the subtle shades of meaning conveyed by Bach in the six different names given to the beginnings of his six Partitas.

Polyphony—See counterpoint. Compositions which are entirely written in more than one voice. Polyphonic sometimes is used to refer exclusively to pre-Baroque contrapuntal compositions.

Secondary dominant—The triad constructed on the fifth degree of the fifth degree of a major or minor scale. In C major, the dominant chord is GBD, the secondary dominant DF#A.

Siciliano—A seventeenth- and eighteenth-century dance of moderate tempo, usually in 6/8 or 12/8 meter having an expressive melody with dotted rhythms. Siciliano usually has an accompaniment of flowing broken chords. See Sinfonia XI.

Sinfonia—In the eighteenth century implied an instrumental composition included in an opera, oratorio or other vocal works. The term was also used to designate an instrumental introduction until the word overture was substituted. Why Bach chose to call the Three-part inventions Sinfonias is somewhat of a mystery.

Subdominant—The triad on the fourth tone of a major or minor scale.

Subject—The principal theme of a fugue.

Ternary—A three-part, but not necessarily three-voiced musical form.

Toccata (It. *toccare*, to touch)—Improvisatory keyboard solo in several sections usually in strict ryhthm but with sudden changes in tempo and texture a form of the Baroque.

Programmatic, Program music—Compositions relying on extra-musical ideas such as imitations of sounds of nature (The Song of the Lark), or any other extra-musical idea, e.g. Sadness of Soul or The Biblical Sonatas by Kuhnau.

Virginal—A keyboard instrument of the harpsichord family associated mainly with sixteenth-century English music.

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